

Outdoor Oklahoma

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2025 — ONLY \$10 A YEAR

**Controlled Hunt
Odds Now Better
In All Categories**

**Got Deer? From
Field to Fork for
Healthy Eating**

**Hunting Hounds:
Who Doesn't Like
Photos of Dogs?**

A PUBLICATION OF THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



PANORAMAS



Trapping in Oklahoma got underway in earnest Dec. 1, when several furbearer hunting seasons opened statewide.

Even though the practice is seen by many as a dying art, trapping remains of interest to plenty of people, and it's still relevant in today's world.

Through science-based wildlife management decisions and proper enforcement, regulated trapping has become one of the best ways to manage wildlife populations.

There is a need for regulated trapping. But in general, the public is highly uninformed about trapping and its benefits.

Regulated trapping helps maintain a balance between wildlife and people. It helps keep urban and suburban residents safe from potential problems caused by people and wildlife living in close proximity to each other, assists experts in relocating species to areas where animals can better thrive, and helps restore threatened and endangered species by controlling predators and other animals that would otherwise have killed these sensitive animals or destroyed their habitats.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) gathered experts and conservationists from all 50 states who are working together to improve and modernize the technology of trapping through scientific research. The effort developed best management practices for trapping to make traps more humane and efficient.

Wildlife species that are trapped are abundant. Regulated trapping doesn't cause wildlife to become endangered and has never led to any species' extinction.

Anyone who traps must follow strict rules set and enforced by state fish and wildlife agencies. Regulations might include restrictions on species, seasons, types of traps, and areas where trapping is permitted.

This year brings enhanced opportunity to trap in Oklahoma.

The 2024 Oklahoma Wildlife License Modernization Act, which consolidated about 50 separate hunting and fishing licenses into 15, did away with the fur license that was required for taking of several furbearer species. Now, only a base hunting license or youth super hunting license is needed for anyone to engage in trapping.

To encourage more participation in trapping, ODWC biologists will conduct several workshops in the coming weeks that will cover everything from scouting to putting up the fur. Participants will be able to set a few traps and perhaps catch some fur of their own! All equipment is provided, and the events are free, but space is limited.

Workshops are set for Jan 25-26 at Fort Gibson Waterfowl Refuge Portion; Feb. 1-2 at Pushmataha Wildlife Management Area; Feb. 8-9 at Packsaddle WMA; and Feb. 22-23 at Osage-Western Wall WMA. Also, ODWC and the National Wild Turkey Federation will hold an open house from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 8, at Cherokee WMA. Space is limited to 75 attendees. Among the activities will be a trapping workshop. Register for any of the events at license.gooutdoor-soklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.

There are so many ways that well-enforced, regulated trapping can positively impact the landscape around us. Whether you choose to practice trapping yourself, employ a private business or federal agency, or grant access to your property for use by a resident trapper, you can benefit by supporting regulated trapping. ♡

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerrod Davis". The signature is stylized with a large, flowing "J" and "D".

Jerrod Davis,

ODWC furbearer biologist

Outdoor Oklahoma

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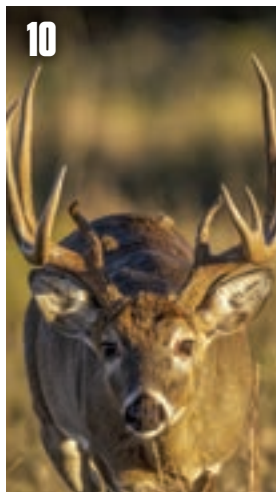
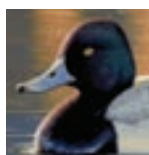


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ON THE COVER:

A painting of lesser scaup by Cynthia Fisher of Hamilton, Mont., won this year's Oklahoma Waterfowl Stamp Design Contest; our cover features a detail from the painting. The artwork will grace Oklahoma's 2025-26 Duck

Stamp, on sale in July. Want to own an original Oklahoma duck stamp painting? One will be sold at auction at the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation's annual fundraising Call of the Wild Gala, to be held Feb. 28 in Oklahoma City. Get tickets at onecau.se/owcfgala2025.

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OKLAHOMA



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

NOTES ON WILDLIFE • OUTDOOR TIPS • READERS' LETTERS • ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS
COMPILED BY DON P. BROWN

HUNTING, SHOOTING CREATED \$251B IMPACT IN '22

**OKLAHOMA'S
758,580 TARGET
SHOOTERS SPENT
\$1.3 BILLION ON
RELATED PURCHASES
IN 2022 AND PAID
\$205 MILLION IN
FEDERAL, STATE AND
LOCAL TAXES.**

**OKLAHOMA'S
372,660 HUNTERS
SPENT \$937
MILLION ON RELATED
PURCHASES IN
2022 AND PAID \$141
MILLION IN FEDERAL,
STATE AND
LOCAL TAXES.**

Did you know that U.S. target shooters outnumber the population of every U.S. state except California?

A new report released by the Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation boasts stunning numbers when it comes to the impact hunters and shooters have on federal and state economies. Together they are responsible for more than \$106.2 billion in retail sales and contributed \$133 billion to economic growth in 2022, the latest data available. In turn, that economic stimulus generated \$251 billion in economic activity through the multiplier effect.

"Many people may not care about hunting, the Second Amendment or conservation, but everyone is impacted by the economy and these reports clearly illustrate that hunters and shooters provide an important, and consistent, economic engine for national and local economic health," said Rob Southwick, president of Southwick Associates, the report's author.

"It's important that people – the general public, and state and federal legislators – understand that America's hunters and sport shooters are an incredibly important force when it comes to our national, state and local economies, as well as providing an outsized share of conservation funding," said Evan Heusinkveld, foundation CEO.

Here are some startling facts about the 2022 economic impact of hunting and target shooting in the U.S.:

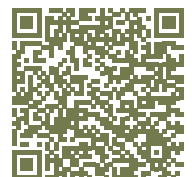
- The contribution to the U.S. GDP from the activities of target shooters is greater than the overall GDP of 132 countries.
- The retail sales produced by hunting (\$45.2 billion) is nearly equal to the combined sys-



tem-wide sales of both Starbucks (\$26.5 billion) and McDonald's (\$21.1 billion combined).

- The revenue generated by the handgun industry (\$20 billion) is higher than the Gross Domestic Product of 97 countries.
- Hunters contributed nearly \$38 million a day in state, local, and federal taxes that goes to support wildlife agencies and conservation.
- The revenue generated by target shooting (\$61.2 billion) is greater than the combined revenue of all 32 NFL teams (\$13 billion).
- Hunting generated more revenue (\$45.2 billion) than Nationwide Insurance (\$44 billion), United Airlines (\$43 billion), Dow (\$43 billion), and Tyson Foods (\$42.4 billion).
- Target shooting generated more revenue (\$61.2 billion) than Sysco (\$60.1 billion), Christian Dior (\$60.1 billion), Lockheed Martin (\$59.8 billion), or HP (\$58.8 billion).

To view the complete report and download your state or congressional district information, visit <https://sportsmensalliance.org/news/new-report-economic-impact-of-hunting-and-shooting-in-america> or scan the code. 



GAME BAG

A COLLECTION OF LETTERS TO THE WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

We'd like to hear from you! Send your letters to **Outdoor Oklahoma Letters**, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152, or send e-mail to donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov.

Dear Col. **Nathan Erdman**, Chief of Law Enforcement,

The Oklahoma Commissioners of the Land Office (CLO) would like to thank you for once again offering the presence of your game wardens at our auctions. The game wardens are always courteous, interact well with our attendees, and add an extra layer of safety for all who attend our annual auctions.

We look forward to seeing them again next year! Thank you for your time and your service.

Marisa Belknap, administrative programs officer,
Real Estate Management Division, CLO



Dear **Megan Moore**,

I loved your article on Western meadowlarks (Watchable Wildlife, Nov./Dec. 2024).

I spent 35 years in Oklahoma teaching at Oklahoma State University, and I loved to turkey hunt, so I was in the woods a lot in springtime.

One of my true joys would happen as I settled in to call. Frequently there would be a fence nearby with wooden posts. Darn near every post would have meadowlarks sitting on it, singing their hearts out with great hopes for results. I would sit there for seemingly hours listening to and fascinated by the majesty of it.

I won't admit that the moisture in my eyes was related to the beauty — but you know, maybe. Keep writing.

Wayne Turner, Dillon, Colo.



YOUR CONTEST PHOTO COULD AMAZE THOUSANDS


Imagine the thrill of opening a magazine and a captivating photo you created is staring back at you from the page! That can happen for you, as it does scores of Outdoor Oklahoma readers each year, when one of their images is selected among the "best of the best" in our annual Readers' Photography Showcase competition.

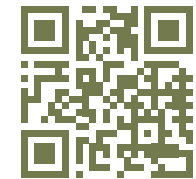
Each year, our July/August issue showcases photos of wildlife, fish, landscapes, scenics and other outdoor imagery captured by wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts from across the state.

The photo entry period is open online now through April 15, 2025.

Each participant may submit up to three original digital images. Photos must be in sharp focus and of high quality and high resolution for magazine printing.

The winning images will create a stunning visual journey for Outdoor Oklahoma's readers. So why not give it a shot — or your best three shots? We hope to see your entries, and good luck!

To enter your images, scan the QR code and follow the instructions. 




ATOKA WMA SHOOTING-ARCHERY RANGE OPENS

A new shooting range facility at Atoka Wildlife Management Area opened to the public in late December, just in time for those who received gifts of rifles, handguns, shotguns or archery gear over the holidays.

Construction began in March 2024, said Amanda Thomas, shooting range coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

The facility features a 100-yard rifle range with four covered shooting benches, a 30-yard pistol range with four covered shooting benches, target frames, an archery range with a shooting tower and four shooting lanes, a shotgun/trap range, and Americans with Disabilities Act parking and access throughout.

Since 2015, ODWC has been addressing the need for increased public shooting access for new hunters and for recreational and competitive shooters. Partnerships with conservation partners including the National Rifle Association and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have proved invaluable in building or renovating shooting ranges across the state.

Anyone using ODWC shooting ranges must possess a valid Oklahoma hunting or combination license, unless otherwise exempt. 

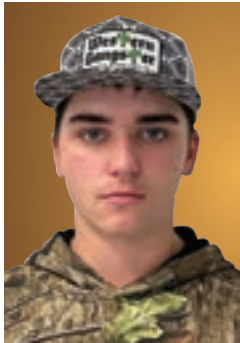


The Atoka shooting range sits northeast of Bluestem Lake.

2024 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

"THERE IS NO BETTER FEELING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT"

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and Oklahoma Station Chapter Safari Club International sponsor a creative writing competition for middle and high school students. A boy and a girl from two age divisions are selected winners. Students write essays using the theme "Hunting: Sharing the Heritage" or "Archery: What I Like About Archery in the Schools and Bowhunting." Winners in the age 15-17 category receive a guided antelope hunt in the Texas Panhandle, and winners in the 11-14 age category receive a hunting trip with Rack Attack Outfitters of Fairview (or similar) and a scholarship to the Outdoor Texas Camp. In this issue, Outdoor Oklahoma honors senior category male winner Cooper VanOrsdol, 15, from Depew Public Schools.



By Cooper VanOrsdol

Imagine a classroom where students, instead of just learning core subjects such as English and math, also learn patience, precision and respect for nature through archery and bowhunting. Since archery was brought into schools, the number of youths participating in archery has skyrocketed, especially in my small community of Depew. Archery has been impactful to my life and the lives in my community, because it has increased the number of people involved in the sport of hunting as well as developing a deeper respect for wildlife and the great outdoors. A hidden life lesson resulting from the sport of hunting is the teaching of patience and self-discipline, as well.

The amount of deer harvested in Oklahoma during 2023 was the highest it's ever been, setting a new record. The archery aspect rose drastically, as well. Although in some regions of the United States bow hunting rates the highest, in Oklahoma rifle hunting is still ranked No. 1. What leads bow hunting to be highly successful considering that not as many people hunt archery in Oklahoma, is its season runs so much longer than the others. Personally I hunt both rifle and bow, but bow hunting has to be my favorite. It is simply to me more challenging. Just by having to get the deer closer into range, and then getting to hear the pop of the string on the silencer is like heaven! The anticipation bow hunting brings is like no other, which makes it that much more fun. One of the things I love most about bow hunting is when you finally get up to your harvest and you get to hold the rack of the buck in your hands, and get to take a picture with your kill and bow. You just can't beat that on a cold, crisp November morning.

Another thing archery has taught me is patience and self-discipline. You have to be willing to correct your mistakes, whether it's re-sighting-in your bow or aiming longer and more steady. When I first started the National Archery in the Schools Program in my class, I had to learn to be more steady on my aim and release. Every time I fire my bow and hit the 10 circle in NASP, or when I

hit the 10 circle on the turkey in varsity, it's like a sigh of relief.

One thing archery and bowhunting give me is a sense of accomplishment. Whether it's successfully tracking a deer, or it's watching a comet of hope fly from the 15-meter line in NASP. It just gives you the feeling you have something to be proud of. Every time you release an arrow with accuracy is like a 45-pound plate lifted off of you. One of the main things archery has taught me is that patience and practice are keys to success.

I started hunting when I was a young boy. I started out rifle hunting with Marlin 30-30, then I got into bow hunting when I was 12 with a Mission compound bow by Mathews. I now love bow hunting because the season is so much longer than the others. Then you can get bucks before they start chasing does in the rut, which typically comes during rifle season. During bow season, you can catch them on corn piles usually at dawn and a little before dusk. When in the stand on a crispy, cold morning before dawn, you get to see magic happen, as squirrels start to come out of the trees, or as rabbits come out of their dens. But the best of all is the beautiful Oklahoma sunrise you get to witness in nature's glorious beauty.

Like a skilled bow hunter or an archer consistently draw backs their bow with accuracy and precision to the target circle or lungs of a deer, we too must in life guide ourselves with accuracy and determination, like an arrow flying through the air. Life is like archery, in that the journey may present difficulties, like if the wind is howling in the wrong direction and the deer smell me and they run off. I don't get to shoot one that day, but that doesn't mean I'm supposed to give up. You have to have determination and never give up when you face difficulties. In embracing this consistency we can transform our dreams into reality, like a master bow hunter shooting a big buck with precision accuracy in the woods. Archery and hunting are legacies that not only have been passed down to me but that I will surely pass down to my children. 🏹



LESSER SCAUP PAIR WINS DUCK STAMP CONTEST

The judges and voters have spoken, and the winner of this year's Oklahoma Waterfowl Stamp Design Contest is Cynthia Fisher of Hamilton, Mont.

Honorable mention selections in random order went to John Harris of Groveland, Fla.; Christopher Goins of Sheridan, Ark.; and Jay Christensen of Spanish Fork, Utah.

Fisher's depiction of a lesser scaup drake and hen sitting on water will serve as the design for Oklahoma's 2025-26 duck stamp, which is purchased by waterfowl hunters and collectors every year and helps to fund the Wildlife Department's wetland habitat activities. Fisher receives a \$1,200 purchase award.

Fisher's artwork was among 28 entries submitted this year by hopeful artists from across the nation, including seven artists from Oklahoma.

The Wildlife Department has held the Oklahoma waterfowl stamp art contest annually for 44 years. The program was designed to fund activities to ensure quality habitat for the hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese that migrate through the state each year.

The program generates funding for waterfowl conservation projects through the sale of waterfowl licenses, required of most waterfowl hunters, and the sale of stamps, many of which are purchased by



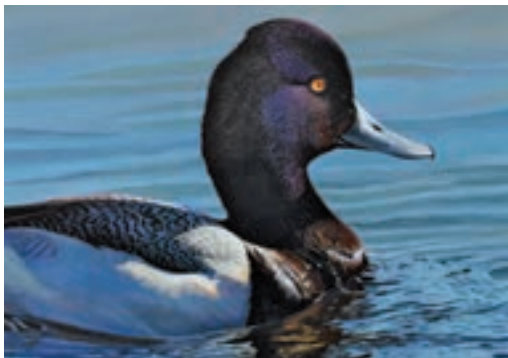
WINNER: *Cynthia Fisher* of Hamilton, Mont.

collectors. The state duck stamp formerly served as Oklahoma's waterfowl hunting license.

The program has helped the Wildlife Department acquire almost 12,000 wetland acres and to enhance, create, restore and maintain critical waterfowl habitat. Wetland development units such as Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area in southwestern Oklahoma and Red Slough Wildlife Management Area in McCurtain County have benefited from state duck stamp funding.

To support waterfowl habitat conservation in Oklahoma, buy an Oklahoma duck stamp in the online Outdoor Store at <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Shop/Inventory>.

The next duck stamp art contest will kick off April 1, 2025, with the opening of online registration for artists. The subject is the canvasback, and original artwork will be due at Wildlife Department headquarters in Oklahoma City by Aug. 31, 2025. For full contest rules, go to wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/resources/waterfowl/duck-stamp-program. ♡



HONORABLE MENTION: *John Harris* of Groveland, Fla.



HONORABLE MENTION: *Payton Jay Christensen* of Spanish Fork, Utah.



HONORABLE MENTION: *Christopher Goins* of Sheridan, Ark.

GAME WARDEN'S JOURNAL

ACCOUNTS FROM THE FIELD BY THE PUBLIC SERVANTS WHO ENFORCE THE FISH AND WILDLIFE LAWS OF OKLAHOMA.



Just before 6 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 24, someone on the Black Kettle National Grasslands Unit 3 (County Roads 1760 and 840) in Roger Mills County shot and killed a horse on adjacent private property. The suspect vehicle was described as a dark SUV with a tribal tag and a large pink sticker on the rear window. Anyone with information is asked to contact game warden **Tucker Blackburn** at (580) 497-6897.

On Nov. 8, while patrolling Carter County, game warden **Jaylen Flynn** came across a truck stopped



diagonally on a county road. Flynn then watched the truck's passenger run into a pasture to retrieve a freshly rifle-shot doe. The driver confessed to shooting the doe from his truck from the road with a .22-caliber rifle. While securing the rifle from the suspect's truck, Flynn noticed fresh blood on a dog box in the bed. He saw a second illegally taken doe that was already loaded

in the truck. The driver admitted to poaching it, as well. Numerous charges were filed in district court. The deer meat was donated to local families in need.

Northwestern Oklahoma game wardens checked three waterfowlers from Louisiana and ended up educating them about possession limits and illegal transportation of fully cleaned ducks. The three hunters had



a total of 66 ducks (many breasted-out) and two geese. It is illegal to transport ducks without either the head or fully feathered wing attached because some species have restricted limits due to lower population numbers. All meat was donated to families in need.

This buck was shot from the road on or about Nov. 17 in western Pontotoc County 1 mile south of Vanoss on County Road 3445. The buck was left where it fell. Evidence was collected at the scene. Anyone with information about this poaching is asked to call game warden **Clayton Johnson** at (580) 399-9289. You can also call the toll-free Operation Game Thief hot line about this crime or any others at (800) 522-8039 during normal business hours. You can remain anonymous, and you might earn a cash reward.



(Reports from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation-Game Wardens Facebook page.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please help make a difference! When violators break the law, they steal fish and wildlife from you! Report violations anonymously by calling Operation Game Thief at (800) 522-8039. You could earn a cash reward.

IT'S THE LAW:

New this spring, any youth 17 and younger, regardless of residency, may fish in Oklahoma without having a fishing license, thanks to passage of the 2024 Oklahoma Wildlife License Modernization Act. For the purposes of hunting and fishing licenses, the new law standardizes the definition of "youth" as anyone younger than 18. No fishing license is required for anyone on Oklahoma's 2025 Free Fishing Days, set for June 7-8. 🍷

REPORTS SUGGEST CDV OUTBREAK IN NE OKLAHOMA RACCOONS

Reports of raccoons with symptoms of **Canine distemper virus (CDV)** have increased lately in northeastern Oklahoma.

CDV is a highly contagious disease that affects raccoons, coyotes, skunks, foxes, and unvaccinated domestic dogs and cats. CDV symptoms can include discharge from eyes and nose, lethargy, disorientation/stumbling, and an emaciated appearance.

The disease poses no known threat to people. CDV is always present in the environment but is more noticeable when population densities are naturally higher or artificially inflated by food/water sources and/or weather events.

Transmission occurs through direct contact with body fluids or droppings from an infected animal. The best way to reduce CDV risk is to ensure pets are up to date on vaccinations.

There is no treatment for animals with CDV. It progresses rapidly and is most often fatal.

Tips to address CDV risks:

- Keep people and pets a safe distance from suspect animals.
- Sick raccoons may come through your yard. If you find a dead raccoon, bury it deep enough to discourage any digging by pets or wild animals, or double-bag and dispose of the carcass in the trash. Always wear rubber gloves when disposing of wild animals.
- Do not attempt to capture or help a potentially sick animal. Once symptoms appear, there is no available treatment.
- Do not feed raccoons. This can lead to higher concentrations in a local area, which can increase the spread of the disease.
- Report sick/injured animals to the local animal control service.
- Feed pets indoors, or remove leftovers if outside feeding is the only option.
- Make sure attractants, such as garbage cans and compost bins, are securely covered. 🦊



FRED SHELTON/RPS 2018

OUTDOOR CALENDAR

FOR THE LATEST UPDATES, GO ONLINE TO LICENSE.
GOOUTDOORSOKLAHOMA.COM/Event/Events.aspx

NOTICE: Events were scheduled at press time; they are subject to change.

JANUARY 2025

- 1** New Year's Day (state offices closed).
- 4** Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
- 5** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 6** Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City. Livestream: YouTube.com/@OkWildlifeDept
- 12** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 17-19** 2025 Duck Camp, Oklahoma Backcountry Hunters and Anglers fundraiser, Newkirk and Kaw WMA. Register: www.backcountryhunters.org/2025_oklahoma_bha_duck_camp.
- 19** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 20** Martin Luther King Jr. Day (state offices closed).
- 24-25** Squirrel Fest: Hunt and Learn, 6 p.m. to 3 p.m., Sequoyah State Park. Register: your.nwtf.org/events.
- 26** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events (date) in Chandler (11); Ponca City (18); Weatherford (25); Stillwater (30); Chickasha (31). Info: www.ducks.org/events.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events (date) in Chandler (10); Edmond (18). Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events>.

FEBRUARY 2025

- 1** Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
- 1-2** Trapping Workshop, Pushmataha WMA. Register: license. gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 2** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 3** Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City. Livestream: YouTube.com/@OkWildlifeDept
- 8** Cherokee WMA Open House, 9 a.m.-noon. Register: your.nwtf.org/events.
- 8-9** Trapping Workshop, Packsaddle WMA. Register: license. gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 9** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 16** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 17** Presidents Day (state offices closed).
- 22** Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation annual banquet, 5 p.m., Greenwood Cultural Center, Tulsa. Tickets: rmef.org/events.
- 22-23** Trapping Workshop, Osage-Western Wall WMA. Register: license. gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 23** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** event (date) in Pryor (28). Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events>.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events (date) in Kingfisher (1); Collinsville (7); Edmond (8); Tahlequah (13); Medicine Park (15); Yukon (21). Info: www.ducks.org/events.

** FOR HUNTING SEASON DATES, GO TO
www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/seasons **

WELCOME TO THE DOCK!

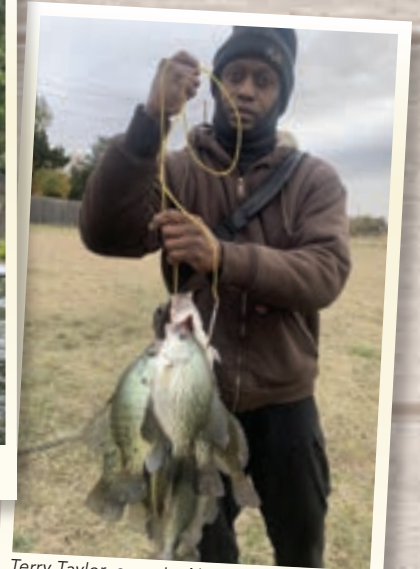
Are the fish biting? You bet! Step onto **The Dock** and take a gander at some great catches made recently by Oklahoma anglers. Here's a few we thought you would enjoy! To see more or submit a photo of your catch, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/the_dock or scan the code:



Dana Rockey, Nov. 23, 2024, blue catfish, Fort Cobb Reservoir.



Angel Gonzalez, Nov. 9, 2024, striped bass, Arkansas River.



Terry Taylor, crappie, Nov. 27, 2024, Oklahoma County.



Tarik L., Oct. 6, 2024, blue catfish, Lake Arcadia.



Tracie Hamlett, Oct. 5, 2024, hybrid striped bass, Canton Lake.



Larry Diotte, Oct. 30, 2024, black bass, Konawa Lake.



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

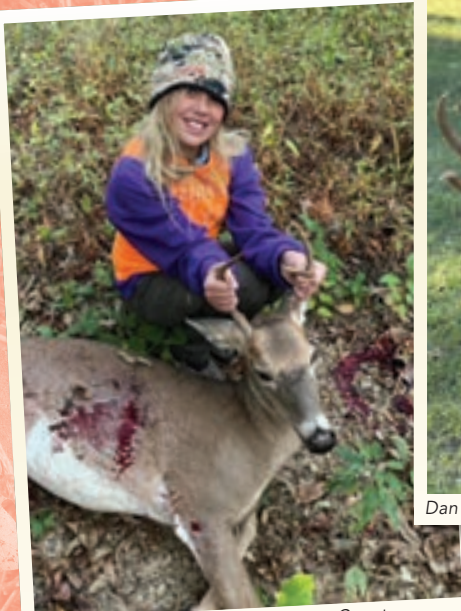
WE WANT TO KNOW THE
OPINIONS OF OUR READERS!

Please scan the QR code to provide feedback
about Outdoor Oklahoma magazine.



WELCOME TO THE TAILGATE!

Is the hunting good? You bet! Step up to **The Tailgate** and check out some great harvests during recent seasons by hunters in Oklahoma. Here's a few we thought you would enjoy! To submit your photo of a successful hunting trip, or to see what others have harvested, go to wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/tailgate or scan the code:



Brynlee Hayden, first deer, Pontotoc County.



Dan Stewart, nontypical deer, Carter County.



Brecken Hayden, first deer, Pontotoc County.



Larson M., first deer, Woods County.



Wesley Reece, deer, Cotton County.



Hunter Kight, woodcock, Kaw WMA, Kay County.

A photograph of a buck with large, velvet-covered antlers standing in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. The background is a soft-focus forest with warm, autumnal light filtering through the trees.

CONTROL Yet More Ways

EXTRA PREFERENCE POINT NOW AV

Additional features continue to be added to the Wildlife Department's controlled hunts program.

New for 2025, hopeful hunters will be able to buy one extra Preference Point to add to their totals for each hunt category. This feature expands on the option added last year, as it was only available in the elk and pronghorn hunt categories.

The controlled hunts application period is set

to open in early April at GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com (license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Licensing/CustomerLookup.aspx). The application period will close in late May 2024.

The expanded option to **add another preference point** in each hunt category (elk, pronghorn, deer and turkey) will cost an additional \$10 for residents or \$50 for nonresidents. These "extra" preference points



ED HUNTS to Up Your Odds

AVAILABLE IN ALL HUNT CATEGORIES

JEREMIAH ZURENDA/COURTESY

work just like the traditional points earned every time your application isn't drawn — they carry forward for future drawings and increase your odds of being selected even more!

Another option is the ability to **add more hunt choices** above the standard number allowed in each category. These add-on choices cost \$3 each, and there is no limit to the number of hunt choices added.

OVERALL CHANCES

This article is designed to give controlled hunts applicants some insights into how the program works, insights that might give you an edge to having your name drawn for perhaps the hunt of a lifetime.

Take some time and look into last year's statistics on controlled hunts, and you could increase the likelihood that your name will be

drawn this year for a controlled hunt permit. The numbers do reveal some application trends that you can use to your advantage.

In the 2024-25 controlled hunts drawing, one out of every 25.4 applicants had his or her name drawn.

2024-25 OVERALL ODDS OF BEING DRAWN: 1 IN 25.4

Hopeful hunters turned in 130,364 applications for one of the 5,116 individual controlled hunt permits available last year. Many of those applicants will apply again this year when the 2025-26 controlled hunts

application submission period opens online.

The most important thing a hopeful hunter can do is to apply each year. Your chances of selection only get better each year. If you've applied for the controlled hunt of your dreams for five years straight without having been selected, then you have five "tickets in the hopper" for next year's drawing, compared to a first-time applicant, who will have just one.

The online application process is straightforward, and the system is designed so that only applications completed correctly will be accepted. This assures each applicant that his or her application was successful and that the applicant's name will definitely be in the drawings.

Winners of controlled hunts are **randomly selected** through a computerized process that draws applications from the entire pool of those submitted.

Hunters will be able to apply for several hunts within each category, which increases the chances of being selected for a hunt.

Those not drawn in a hunt category will gain a preference point for the drawings held in that category in future years, as long as the application is made in the same hunt category. Not only that, but some hunt categories allow applications for an entire group of hunters, which boosts chances of being drawn.

Don't miss your chance to win one of these special hunts that often create lifelong memories.

WHY THESE HUNTS?

Controlled hunts are held in areas where unrestricted public hunting would pose safety concerns or where overharvest might occur. So, these hunts mostly take place on Wildlife Department-owned or -managed areas where hunting for the target species is normally not permitted.

Controlled hunts are offered for deer, elk, pronghorn, and turkey.

Hunters wishing to go on a controlled hunt must submit an application, which goes into the running with all other applications for that hunt. Hunters are selected through random drawings in each category.

Getting drawn for a controlled hunt is a matter of odds. Many controlled hunt choices are highly sought-after, and the number of applications for these marquee hunts greatly exceeds the number of available permits. But if you keep applying year after year, it's likely you'll get a chance sooner or later to enjoy a controlled hunt.

How do I participate? Simply submit an easy-to-complete application online through your GoOutdoorsOklahoma account. Applications are accepted online only.

You cannot submit more than one application per category. Since applications are completed and submitted online, you will



ALAN MCGUCKIN/IPS 2024

DEER HUNTS								
Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()	
Atoka WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/22/2024	11/24/2024	3001	1,244	40	31.1	
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit - Either Sex	Gun	11/23/2024	11/24/2024	3007	404	2	202	
Beaver River WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/23/2024	11/24/2024	3008	417	2	208.5	
Candy Creek WMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/26/2024	11/3/2024	3020	301	12	25.08	
Candy Creek WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/23/2024	12/8/2024	3021	476	12	39.67	
Canton WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/23/2024	11/24/2024	3030	894	75	11.92	
Cherokee GMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/16/2024	11/16/2024	3044	1,490	60	24.83	
Cherokee GMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/17/2024	11/17/2024	3046	941	60	15.68	
Cookson WMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/2/2024	11/3/2024	3060	1,039	12	86.58	
Cookson WMA - Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/2/2024	11/2/2024	3061	91	23	3.96	
Cookson WMA - Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/3/2024	11/3/2024	3062	54	23	2.35	
Cookson WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/9/2024	11/10/2024	3063	1,928	12	160.67	
Cookson WMA - Antlerless Only	Gun	11/9/2024	11/9/2024	3064	127	18	7.06	
Cookson WMA - Antlerless Only	Gun	11/10/2024	11/10/2024	3065	80	18	4.44	
Deep Fork NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	10/14/2024	10/20/2024	3080	828	50	16.56	
Deep Fork NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/4/2024	11/30/2024	3081	733	300	2.44	
Four Canyon Preserve - Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	10/18/2024	10/19/2024	3090	23	4	5.75	
Four Canyon Preserve - (2) Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/18/2024	10/19/2024	3091	213	2	106.5	
Four Canyon Preserve - Antlerless Only	Gun	11/8/2024	11/9/2024	3092	36	4	9	
Four Canyon Preserve - (2) Either Sex	Gun	11/8/2024	11/9/2024	3093	468	2	234	
Fort Gibson WRP - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/22/2024	10/22/2024	3110	458	50	9.16	
Fort Gibson WRP - Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	10/23/2024	10/23/2024	3111	168	50	3.36	
Fort Gibson WRP - Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/12/2024	11/12/2024	3112	166	50	3.32	
Fort Gibson WRP - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/13/2024	11/13/2024	3113	954	25	38.16	
Fort Gibson WRP - Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/13/2024	11/13/2024	3114	121	25	4.84	
Grady County WMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/26/2024	11/3/2024	3120	251	10	25.1	
Grady County WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/23/2024	12/1/2024	3121	503	10	50.3	
Lexington WMA - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/16/2024	11/16/2024	3150	702	135	5.2	
Lexington WMA - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/17/2024	11/17/2024	3151	428	135	3.17	
Lexington WMA - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/20/2024	11/20/2024	3152	343	135	2.54	
Lexington WMA - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/21/2024	11/21/2024	3153	279	135	2.07	
Little River NWR - 2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	Gun	11/1/2024	11/3/2024	3160	665	30	22.17	
Little River NWR - 2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	Gun	11/8/2024	11/10/2024	3161	692	30	23.07	
McAlester AAP Physically Challenged - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/11/2024	10/13/2024	3170	192	70	2.74	
McAlester AAP - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/18/2024	10/20/2024	3171	1,967	275	7.15	
McAlester AAP - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/25/2024	10/27/2024	3172	2,823	275	10.27	
McAlester AAP - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/1/2024	11/3/2024	3173	4,025	275	14.64	
McAlester AAP - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/8/2024	11/10/2024	3174	4,718	275	17.16	
McAlester AAP - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/15/2024	11/17/2024	3175	4,365	275	15.87	
McCurtain Co. WA - Either Sex	Gun	11/8/2024	11/10/2024	3190	921	16	57.56	
McGee Creek WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/22/2024	11/24/2024	3201	1,354	65	20.83	
Neosho WMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/9/2024	11/10/2024	3203	190	6	31.67	
Oka'Yanahli Preserve - (2) Antlerless Only	Gun	10/4/2024	10/6/2024	3206	72	7	10.29	
Oka'Yanahli Preserve - (2) Antlerless Only	Gun	12/13/2024	12/15/2024	3207	60	7	8.57	
Okmulgee GMA - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/16/2024	11/17/2024	3210	1,185	30	39.5	
Osage-Western Wall WMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/30/2024	11/3/2024	3220	1,014	10	101.4	
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve - (2) Antlerless Only	Gun	10/4/2024	10/6/2024	3223	52	6	8.67	
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve - (2) Antlerless Only	Gun	10/11/2024	10/13/2024	3224	44	6	7.33	
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve - (2) Antlerless Only	Gun	12/13/2024	12/15/2024	3225	44	6	7.33	
Pushmataha WMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/22/2024	11/24/2024	3230	1,123	50	22.46	
Salt Plains NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	12/2/2024	12/5/2024	3240	388	25	15.52	
Salt Plains NWR Wild. Area - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	12/2/2024	12/5/2024	3241	375	10	37.5	
Salt Plains NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/4/2024	11/6/2024	3242	883	25	35.32	
Salt Plains NWR Wild. Area - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/4/2024	11/6/2024	3243	703	10	70.3	
Salt Plains NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/12/2024	11/14/2024	3244	2,101	25	84.04	
Salt Plains NWR Wild. Area - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/12/2024	11/14/2024	3245	1,695	10	169.5	
Salt Plains NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/18/2024	11/20/2024	3246	1,554	25	62.16	
Salt Plains NWR Wild. Area - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/18/2024	11/20/2024	3247	1,159	10	115.9	
Sans Bois WMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/8/2024	11/10/2024	3275	350	15	23.33	
Sans Bois WMA - Either Sex	Gun	10/25/2024	10/27/2024	3276	644	15	42.93	
Sequoyah NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/11/2024	11/15/2024	3280	961	30	32.03	
Sequoyah NWR - (2) Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	10/30/2024	11/1/2024	3281	263	30	8.77	

receive confirmation that your application was completed correctly. This system helps to minimize mistakes, so make sure you receive confirmation of your application. If you do have any issues, call the toll-free help line listed at the bottom of the webpage, (833) 457-7285, or send email to HelpDesk@goooutdoorsoklahoma.com.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

You can increase your chances by first doing some research. Examine the statistics from the most recent controlled hunts drawing cycle. Anyone who plans to apply this coming year is urged to study the numbers to help guide you as to which hunts you should apply for if you want higher odds of being selected.

For example, you might see that a total of two controlled hunts will be held in the wildlife management area that you are hoping to hunt. You notice the selection odds were greater last year for one of the hunts, so you might decide to apply for that hunt in anticipation that this year's numbers remain about the same as last year's.

Every time you apply and do not get selected, you earn a preference point in that category for all future drawings.

So, when you apply next year, it's like getting your name put into the drawing an extra time for each preference point. Your odds of being

drawn improve if you apply again year after year. This strategy now has a greater impact on your odds with the option to buy an additional preference in any or all hunt categories. Applicants who spend \$10 (for residents) or \$50 (for nonresidents) will carry forward two preference points to next year if they are not drawn this year.

Additionally, some hunt categories allow you to apply with a group of other hunters, so that if one of the group is drawn, the entire group gets to hunt.

If you are selected, you will receive your hunt instructions at the email address attached to your online GoOutdoorsOklahoma account.

HELPFUL TIPS

Applicants have the chance to buy **extra hunt choices** at \$3 apiece, which will be in addition to the basic application fee of \$10 for residents and nonresidents. This increases your overall odds of being drawn simply by putting your name into more of the drawings.

You might consider adding **PointGuard** to your application as a safety net just in case something unexpected comes up and you won't be able to attend your hunt. This "insurance" option is designed to protect your preference points in the event you are drawn but for some reason you cannot go on your hunt. PointGuard costs an additional \$10 over the basic application fee for residents, and an additional \$50 over the basic application fee for nonresidents.

Each preference point you earn acts like an extra application for the next year. But if you know you cannot hunt this year and still want to earn a preference point, you can now choose to mark your application as **Preference Point Only**. This allows you to earn a point this year that carries over to next year. As the name implies, your name will not be in the hunt drawings this year. The PPO option is available as an optional choice and is included in the applicant's \$10 basic application fee.

Although preference points increase your odds of selection, they do not guarantee that applicants with the most points will get drawn. What is guaranteed is that their odds of being drawn improve. First-time applicants with no preference points can and do get drawn for popular hunts, while hunters who have many preference points can miss out being drawn. The

CARMON BRIGGS/RPS 2016



WHAT'S THE COST?

A \$10 application fee allows multiple applications in each controlled hunt category (elk, pronghorn, deer, spring turkey) and includes the option to select **Preference Point Only** (no drawing participation). **PointGuard** insurance is available for an additional \$10 for residents or \$50 for nonresidents. Applicants may also add **extra hunt choices** beyond the standard limit for \$3 each.

New for 2025-26 is the chance to get **one additional Preference Point** in all hunt categories at a cost of \$10 for residents and \$50 for nonresidents. This option began last year for the elk and pronghorn hunt categories but has now been expanded to all categories.

DEER HUNTS (CONTINUED)							
Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()
Sequoyah NWR - (2) Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/20/2024	11/22/2024	3282	220	30	7.33
Sequoyah NWR - (2) Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	12/4/2024	12/6/2024	3283	222	30	7.4
Sequoyah NWR (Refuge Islands) - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/11/2024	11/15/2024	3284	74	4	18.5
Sequoyah Resort Park - (2) 1 Either Sex, 1 Antlerless	Archery	12/7/2024	12/8/2024	3286	980	20	49
Spavinaw GMA - Either Sex	Gun	10/26/2024	10/27/2024	3290	1,218	20	60.9
Spavinaw GMA - Antlerless Only	Gun	10/26/2024	10/27/2024	3291	150	30	5
Tishomingo NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	12/12/2024	12/13/2024	3300	751	20	37.55
Washita NWR - Antlerless Only	Gun	11/5/2024	11/6/2024	3320	122	5	24.4
Wichita Mts. NWR - Antlered Only	Gun	11/19/2024	11/21/2024	3340	7,304	20	365.2
Wichita Mts. NWR - Antlerless Only	Gun	11/19/2024	11/21/2024	3341	549	40	13.73
Salt Plains State Park - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/14/2024	10/17/2024	3350	319	10	31.9
Salt Plains State Park - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	12/9/2024	12/12/2024	3351	338	10	33.8
Tishomingo NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/9/2024	11/17/2024	3370	551	20	27.55

DEER HUNTS (NONAMBULATORY, VEHICLE)							
Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()
Cherokee GMA - Either Sex	Gun	10/26/2024	10/27/2024	4001	40	40	1
Cookson WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/16/2024	11/17/2024	4010	38	12	3.17
Copan COE Parks - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	12/6/2024	12/8/2024	4015	31	5	6.2
Deep Fork NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	10/28/2024	11/3/2024	4020	13	5	2.6
Fort Gibson WRP - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	12/10/2024	12/11/2024	4025	25	10	2.5
Oologah Lake COE - (2) 1 Doe, 1 Buck	Gun	11/15/2024	11/17/2024	4040	61	8	7.63
Salt Plains NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/4/2024	11/6/2024	4050	8	1	8
Salt Plains NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/12/2024	11/14/2024	4051	21	1	21
Salt Plains NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/18/2024	11/20/2024	4052	14	1	14
Sequoyah NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/11/2024	11/15/2024	4060	3	2	1.5
Sequoyah NWR - (2) Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/20/2024	11/22/2024	4061	4	2	2
Sequoyah Resort Park - (2) 1 Either Sex, 1 Antlerless	Muzzleloader	12/21/2024	12/22/2024	4070	26	14	1.86
Tishomingo NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/7/2024	11/8/2024	4080	36	10	3.6

YOUTH DEER HUNTS							
Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit - Either Sex	Gun	10/18/2024	10/20/2024	5006	150	15	10
Camp Gruber Cantonment - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/29/2024	12/1/2024	5009	116	40	2.9
Cherokee GMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/2/2024	11/3/2024	5010	146	50	2.92
Canton WRP	Gun	11/9/2024	11/17/2024	5014	79	2	39.5
Canton WRP	Gun	12/14/2024	12/22/2024	5015	43	2	21.5
Cookson WMA - Either Sex	Gun	10/26/2024	10/27/2024	5020	169	30	5.63
Cross Timbers WMA - Antlerless Only	Gun	11/23/2024	12/1/2024	5025	19	30	.63
Deep Fork NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	10/21/2024	10/27/2024	5030	43	25	1.72
Eufaula Lake COE	Gun	11/1/2024	11/3/2024	5035	94	5	18.8
Fort Cobb WMA and SP - Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader/ Shotgun	10/12/2024	10/13/2024	5040	17	25	.68
Fort Gibson WRP - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	11/9/2024	11/9/2024	5050	60	20	3
Heyburn COE - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	12/13/2024	12/15/2024	5053	58	2	29
Kaw Lake COE - (2) 1 Either Sex, 1 Doe	Gun	11/1/2024	11/3/2024	5055	129	6	21.5
Hugo WMA - Either Sex	Gun	10/11/2024	10/13/2024	5060	76	30	2.53
Hugo Lake COE (Kiamichi Park) - (2) Only 1 Antlered.	Gun	10/11/2024	10/13/2024	5061	112	10	11.2
Hugo Lake COE (Kiamichi Park) - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	12/13/2024	12/15/2024	5062	114	10	11.4
James Collins WMA - Either Sex	Gun	10/18/2024	10/20/2024	5070	162	40	4.05
James Collins WMA - Either Sex	Gun	10/25/2024	10/27/2024	5071	200	40	5
Keystone COE - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	12/6/2024	12/8/2024	5080	132	8	16.5
Little River NWR - 2 Deer (Only 1 Antlered)	Gun	10/25/2024	10/27/2024	5085	20	15	1.33
McAlester AAP - Doe	Shotgun	11/29/2024	12/1/2024	5090	34	25	1.36
Neosho WMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/12/2024	10/13/2024	5095	4	6	.67
Neosho WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/2/2024	11/3/2024	5096	14	6	2.33
Okmulgee GMA - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/9/2024	11/10/2024	5111	85	20	4.25
Pine Creek WMA - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/8/2024	11/10/2024	5130	67	25	2.68
Pushmataha WMA - Either Sex	Gun	10/25/2024	10/27/2024	5140	108	35	3.09

pool size related to the number of hunt permits also affects one's chances of being drawn.

Continuing this year, applicants who hold **20 or more preference points** in the once-in-a-lifetime elk and pronghorn hunt categories will have a higher likelihood of winning a permit, as the drawing procedure has been enhanced for those categories. A first drawing for half of the elk hunt permits and half of the antelope hunt permits will be conducted from a pool of only those applicants with 20 or more preference points in the category. The winners of the remaining half of hunt permits in each category will be drawn from the pool of all applicants (excluding those who were selected for hunts in the first drawing).

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR PREFERENCE POINTS

Controlled hunts applicants have two ways to protect their valuable preference points so they continue to count for them in future years.

The **PointGuard** and **Preference Point Only** options are available when hunters apply online for controlled hunt drawings from early April through mid-May. These options are not available after the controlled hunt application period closes.

POINTGUARD

This insurance protects a winning hunter's preference points and eligibility for controlled hunt drawings in future years in case the hunter cannot attend the hunt he or she wins. For example, a hunter submits applications for controlled hunts in the categories of deer, youth deer, and elk. The hunter pays the basic \$10 fee total to apply in all three categories. When applying, the hunter is given the chance to add PointGuard insurance (\$10 for residents; \$50 for nonresident). If the hunter is unable to attend the hunt, the insurance will preserve his preference points in that hunt category that normally would have been cleared. PointGuard allows the hunter to remain eligible for future drawings for once-in-a-lifetime controlled hunts since the hunter wasn't able to attend the current year's hunt. Each hunter applying in a group will be given the option to buy PointGuard individually.

PREFERENCE POINT ONLY (PPO)

This option is for hunters who don't want to put their name in a hunt drawing but still want to obtain an additional preference point for future drawings. It is only available during the online controlled hunt application period from April 1 to mid-May. To choose the PPO option, the hunter will begin submitting an application as he or she normally would for the standard \$10 fee. The hunter will then see an option for Preference Point Only in each category.

In lieu of the hunter's name going into the drawings, the hunter will get one additional preference point in that hunt category, and all of their preference points will carry over for next year's drawing.

In some categories, hunters may **apply in groups** of up to four people. An average of the total preference points of all hunters is used for each hunter in the group. If not drawn in that category, each applicant in the group will earn a single preference point that carries forward with the rest of their points to future drawings.

Once you are drawn for a hunt, all preference points that you have built up in that hunt category are cleared. You can begin building preference points again with your application next year in the deer and turkey categories. (Elk and pronghorn controlled hunts are once-in-a-lifetime draws, and previous winners are not allowed to apply again.)

Here are some **other tips** for increasing your chances of winning a controlled hunt:

- By designating **additional hunt choices**, you increase your overall odds of being selected for at least one of the choices, so make as many selections as a category allows (five in the deer category, for example), rather than just three, two or one. Then consider adding even more hunt choices at \$3 each, no limit.
- Consider the **ratio** of permits to applicants to help you decide which hunts might give you the best chance of selection. A selection ratio of 1-in-25 is better odds than a ratio of 1-in-80.
- You can increase your odds of being drawn when you apply for hunts that happen on **key dates** of the regular statewide seasons, such as the opening weekend of muzzleloader or gun season. Many hunters may skip those dates because of already-planned hunts.
- For those locations that offer multiple hunts in the same category, the second or third hunts (the **later hunts**) are often easier to get selected for than the earliest hunts.
- Hunts that are considered by some to be **less desirable**, such as antlerless deer hunts, may be just the right choice for a meat hunter looking to raise his chances of getting to hunt at a premier location.

2024-25 DEER HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second, third, fourth, and fifth choice preferences): 65,540.
- Total permits available: 3,694.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 17.7.

YOUTH DEER HUNTS (CONTINUED)							
Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()
Pushmataha WMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/8/2024	11/10/2024	5141	137	35	3.91
Salt Plains NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/1/2024	11/3/2024	5150	142	25	5.68
Sequoyah NWR - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	10/18/2024	10/20/2024	5160	129	30	4.3
Sequoyah Resort Park - (2) 1 Either Sex, 1 Antlerless	Muzzleloader	12/14/2024	12/15/2024	5170	199	16	12.44
Skiatook COE - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/29/2024	12/1/2024	5175	104	4	26
Spavinaw GMA - Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/2/2024	11/3/2024	5180	37	40	.93
Spavinaw GMA - Either Sex	Gun	11/8/2024	11/10/2024	5181	115	40	2.88
Tenkiller COE - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/1/2024	11/3/2024	5190	101	10	10.1
Texoma COE (Burns Run) - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/8/2024	11/10/2024	5200	116	6	19.33
Texoma COE (Lakeside) - (2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/15/2024	11/17/2024	5201	113	8	14.13
Tishomingo NWR - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	10/17/2024	10/18/2024	5210	86	20	4.3
USDA Grazinglands R.L. - (2) 1st Antlerless; 2nd Either Sex	Gun	11/8/2024	11/9/2024	5220	105	20	5.25
USDA Grazinglands R.L. - (2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex	Gun	12/13/2024	12/14/2024	5221	81	10	8.1
Washita NWR - Antlerless Only	Gun	10/11/2024	10/12/2024	5240	31	10	3.1
Washita NWR - Antlerless Only	Gun	11/1/2024	11/2/2024	5260	30	10	3
Waurika Lake COE - Antlerless Only	Gun	11/2/2024	11/3/2024	5270	13	5	2.6

- **NOTE:** For better odds of being drawn, avoid putting in for the most popular hunts, including those at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge buck gun hunt, the Sandy Sanders buck gun hunt, and Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge Either Sex hunts.

2024 DEER HUNTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Total applicants (includes first, second, and third choice preferences): 320.
- Total permits available: 111.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 2.9.
- **NOTE:** Northeastern Oklahoma areas including Cherokee, Cookson Hills, Gruber, and Spavinaw WMAs generally get the most applications in this category. Try for hunts in other parts of the state to raise your chances.

2024 YOUTH DEER HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second, and third choice preferences): 3,790.
- Total permits available: 811.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 4.7.
- **NOTE:** Controlled hunts held outside the regular muzzleloader and gun seasons typically draw more applications. Increase your chances by choosing hunt dates that are within those regular state-wide seasons, especially those that fall on opening weekends when most hunter already have other plans.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who can apply?

Any resident or nonresident who possesses a valid hunting license or who is otherwise exempt may apply for controlled hunts. A list of which hunting licenses are valid is available at wildlifedepartment.com. Applicants must buy a license prior to applying for controlled hunts. Applicants who are eligible for, and possess, apprentice-designated hunting licenses may also apply (although some hunts require hunter education certification by the date of the hunt.) Check the website for more information.

Am I guaranteed a hunt if I apply long enough?

No; drawings are random from the specified pool of applicants. But your odds get better every year you submit an application because you earn (or buy) preference points for future drawings.

How do I pay my application fees?

You may pay the one-time application fee (\$10 for residents or \$50 for nonresidents) plus any additional add-on selections using a Visa or MasterCard credit or debit card online at GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. If your name is drawn, additional license and user fees may be required for specific hunt areas, such as federal refuges.

Do my preference points stay with me forever?

Points remain with you, in each category, until your name is drawn, or when you don't submit any application for five consecutive years.

What if my address changes after I applied?

Notify the Wildlife Department's License Section by calling (405) 521-3852.

I was drawn but now I can't go hunting; do I get my preference points back?

If you bought PointGuard insurance during the application period, you will regain your preference points for that hunt category. You can claim your PointGuard insurance any time before the day of your hunt. If you didn't buy PointGuard, your preference points for that hunt category will be lost.

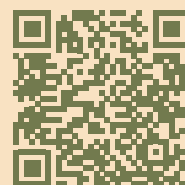


2024-25 ELK HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second, and third choice preferences): 33,406.
- Total permits available: 321.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 104.
- **NOTE:** Enhanced drawings are now upping the odds for applicants with 20 or more preference points in the category. The option to buy one additional preference point to increase your odds for next year's drawing is also available.

CONTROLLED HUNTS WEBSITE

To learn more about the controlled hunts process online, scan the code:



ELK HUNTS

Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()
Cookson WMA - Either Sex	Gun	9/26/2024	9/27/2024	1001	3,478	1	3,478
Wichita Mts. WR - Bull	Gun	12/3/2024	12/5/2024	1020	7,870	40	196.75
Wichita Mts. WR - Cow	Gun	12/3/2024	12/5/2024	1021	959	70	13.7
Wichita Mts. WR (walk-in only) - Either Sex	Gun	12/16/2024	12/20/2024	1030	7,845	10	784.5
Wichita Mts. WR (walk-in only) - Cow	Gun	12/16/2024	12/20/2024	1031	666	60	11.1
Wichita Mts. WR (walk-in only) - Either Sex	Gun	1/6/2025	1/10/2025	1040	6,884	10	688.4
Wichita Mts. WR (walk-in only) - Cow	Gun	1/6/2025	1/10/2025	1041	503	60	8.38
Wichita Mts. WR (walk-in only) - Either Sex	Gun	1/13/2025	1/17/2025	1050	4,830	10	483
Wichita Mts. WR (walk-in only) - Cow	Gun	1/13/2025	1/17/2025	1051	371	60	6.18



2024 PRONGHORN HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first and second choice preferences): 12,851.
- Total permits available: 40.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 321.
- **NOTE:** Applicants can buy one additional preference point to increase the odds for next year's drawing. Pronghorn controlled hunts are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

PRONGHORN HUNTS

Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()
Cimarron County - Either-Sex	Gun	8/29/2024	9/1/2024	2001	5,695	10	569.5
Cimarron County - Doe Only	Gun	9/2/2024	9/9/2024	2002	1,246	15	83.1
Texas County - Either-Sex	Gun	8/29/2024	9/1/2024	2010	5,223	5	1,044.6
Texas County - Doe Only	Gun	9/2/2024	9/9/2024	2011	687	10	68.7



JUSTIN AVERY/RPS 2023

2025 SPRING TURKEY HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second, and third choice preferences): 12,113.
- Total permits available: 101.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 120.
- **NOTE:** Increase your odds of being drawn by passing on the hunts that attract the most applications, such as the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant hunts.

2025 YOUTH TURKEY HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second, and third choice preferences): 1,098.
- Total permits available: 23.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 48.
- **NOTE:** Choosing hunts that take place later in spring come with better odds of being selected.

SPRING TURKEY								
Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()	
Cross Timbers WMA - Tom	Shotgun	4/16/2025	4/20/2025	6000	1,708	10	170.8	
Cross Timbers WMA - Tom	Shotgun	5/10/2025	5/14/2025	6001	869	10	86.9	
Deep Fork NWR - Tom	Shotgun	4/21/2025	5/16/2025	6010	1,392	10	139.2	
Four Canyon Preserve - Tom	Shotgun	4/4/2025	4/5/2025	6020	1,499	2	749.5	
Four Canyon Preserve - Tom	Shotgun	4/11/2025	4/12/2025	6021	1,020	2	510	
Little River NWR - Tom	Shotgun	4/25/2025	4/27/2025	6040	809	20	40.45	
McAlester AAP - Tom	Shotgun	4/11/2025	4/13/2025	6050	1,304	14	93.14	
McAlester AAP - Tom	Shotgun	4/18/2025	4/20/2025	6051	1,063	14	75.93	
McCurtain Co. Wild. Area - Tom	Shotgun	4/11/2025	4/13/2025	6060	1,215	16	75.94	
Tishomingo NWR - Tom	Shotgun	4/24/2025	4/25/2025	6080	1,234	3	411.33	

YOUTH SPRING TURKEY								
Hunt Location-Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Hunt Number	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio 1 in ()	
Hugo COE (Kiamichi Park) - Tom	Shotgun	4/5/2025	4/6/2025	7000	253	4	63.25	
Washita NWR - Tom	Shotgun	4/11/2025	4/13/2025	7010	264	2	132	
Deep Fork NWR - Tom	Shotgun	4/12/2025	5/16/2025	7020	229	10	22.9	
Little River NWR - Tom	Shotgun	4/11/2025	4/13/2025	7040	205	5	41	
Salt Plains NWR - Tom	Shotgun	4/11/2025	4/20/2025	7075	147	2	73.5	

CALLS

OF THE WILD

WHITEMUDWAYNE/NATURALIST CC BY-NC4

GEESE MAKE PLENTY OF NOISE, BUT WHAT'S IT ALL MEAN?

By Chad Belding
TheFowlLife.com

If you've not spent much time around wild geese, it's easy to assume the sounds they make don't go far beyond some honking and a few different tones of clucks and murmurs, mostly sounding the same, and possibly even meaning similar things to other geese.

But spending time with these animals and studying their every move, especially the hours we devote to scouting, has taught most observant waterfowl hunters that from their body language to their different clucks and sounds, each gesture has an entirely different and purposeful meaning. Their means of communication are intricate and integral to their ability to survive, navigate their environment, avoid predators, reproduce successfully, migrate thousands of miles together, and maintain social cohesion.

Understanding the significance of their communication can have a huge impact on the success of all aspects of a hunt. From scouting missions, planning blinds, and setting decoys to the actual

hunt, understanding geese on a deeper level is sure to step up your game in the field.

One obvious reason for a person wanting to learn more about the vocabulary of geese is to be able to mimic their calls. Sometimes even the slightest tone or pitch can have a large effect, whether positive or negative. The hope is that by interpreting their body language and behavior, we can better understand the types of calls they want to hear.

Understanding these vocalizations and non-vocal signals is critical not only for mimicking geese while hunting, but also for appreciating their complex social structures and behaviors. Each type of call and gesture has its own specific context and significance, which we can leverage for success in the field.

GOOSE VOCALIZATIONS

- **Contact Calls:** These calls serve as the glue that holds the flock together, especially during flight. Geese use contact calls to maintain group cohesion and ensure that no individual gets separated. These calls are typically softer and repetitive, allowing geese to stay connected over long distances. These calls also help establish and maintain social bonds within the flock.



JIM HENDRICKSON/WRPS 2018

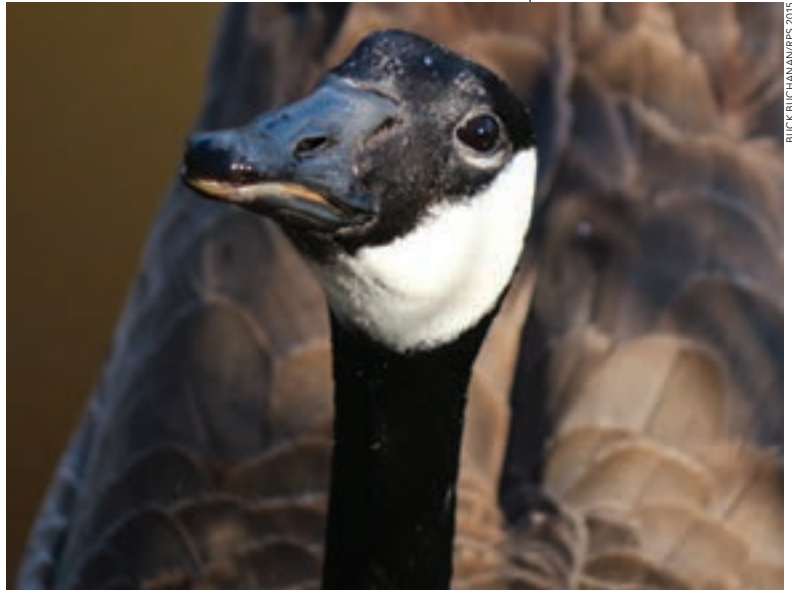
- **Alarm Calls:** When danger is near, geese emit sharp, loud alarm calls to alert the flock. These calls prompt an immediate response, such as taking flight or moving to a safer location. Quick communication of a predator's presence increases the chances of survival for the entire group. Recognizing alarm calls can be critical for understanding when geese are on high alert.
- **Feeding Calls:** When foraging, geese use specific calls to communicate the presence of food. Those quick, soft, low moans and murmurs are signs of happy feeding geese. These sounds help ensure that the entire flock benefits from food resources, reducing competition and increasing overall foraging efficiency.
- **Aggressive Calls:** When defending territory or during confrontations, geese use harsh and intense aggressive calls. These vocalizations serve to ward off intruders or competitors, establishing dominance within the flock. Understanding these calls can provide hunters with clues about territorial boundaries and dominant ganders.
- **Mating Calls:** During the breeding season, geese employ specific calls to attract mates. These calls are often elaborate and varied, showcasing the caller's fitness and suitability as a mate.
- **Parent-Offspring Calls:** Communication between parent geese and their goslings is vital for the young's survival. Goslings have distinctive calls to signal hunger, distress, or the need for attention, while parents use calls to guide and protect their offspring.

NONVOCAL COMMUNICATION

In addition to vocalizations, geese use non-vocal signals to convey information. These sig-

nals — including body language, postures and movements — can indicate aggression, submission or readiness to mate.

- **Wing Postures:** Displaying wings can signal dominance or aggression, making geese appear larger and more threatening to rivals or predators.



BUCKBUCHANAN/WPS 2015

- **Neck Movements:** The position and movements of the neck can communicate different intentions. A stretched neck may indicate alertness or readiness to flee, while a lowered head can signal submission or a non-threatening stance. Observing these small movements in the field can be extremely helpful when you're in the blind calling to geese and trying to decide if they like what they hear or not.
- **Feather Ruffling:** Ruffling feathers can indicate irritation or discomfort, but they can also be part of mating displays, where individuals show off their plumage to attract partners and show dominance.

You've heard it over and over: Scouting helps a hunt's chances of success. So next time you're out in the field, take a moment to observe and listen — you might just pick up on subtle clues that can make all the difference in your hunt. 🦋

(The Fowl Life with Chad Belding produces a TV show for The Outdoor Channel and podcast devoted to waterfowl hunting. The website is TheFowlLife.com.)



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

Museum Pays Tribute to Late Sooner *Fly Fishing Guru*

By Jeff Williams

The late Dave Whitlock, a native Oklahoman who became a world-renowned fly-fishing angler, fly-tying legend, instructor, artist, author and inventor, is being honored by The American Museum of Fly Fishing in a new exhibit at the Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium in Springfield, Missouri.



Whitlock's artwork was featured twice by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation on its durable collector's license card. Anyone who bought an inaugural \$5 durable card in 2018 might know that "Dragon Slayer," depicting a largemouth bass jumping out of the water toward a dragonfly, was Whitlock's creation.

In 2021, Whitlock's "Crappie in the Cedars" was the image selected to appear on the

fishing version of ODWC's durable license card.

Whitlock's world was based on fish — angling, speaking, painting, writing, teaching, photographing, casting, fly-tying and even inventing. He won numerous awards and was inducted into many fishing and outdoor halls of fame. Fly-Fisherman magazine named him to the "Mount Rushmore of Fly-Fishing" with Joe Brooks, Lee Wulff and Lefty Kreh in 2021.



Dave Whitlock with the artwork "Crappie in the Cedars" in his studio in 2020.

Whitlock and his wife, Emily, moved to Welling, Okla., in 2005, and he died there on Nov. 24, 2023, at age 88.

In a 2021 feature article for Outdoor Oklahoma, author Kelly Bostian wrote that Whitlock and his wife, Emily, were a fly-fishing instruction power couple who truly could live just about anywhere they wanted as long as the fishing was good. The "Dave and Emily Whitlock" moniker is known internationally. They fished streams and instructed anglers most everywhere. Television shows, instructional videos, lecturing tours — they did it all.

As a boy in the 1940s, Whitlock first saw a fly rod in an L.L. Bean catalog. He asked his grandfather what it was, and was told fly-fishing was a rich man's sport. "Now, fast-forward to 1980," Whitlock told Voices of Oklahoma in a 2019 interview. "Here was a handicapped kid (who) discovered fly-fishing through the L.L. Bean catalog, and in 1980, I became the head of the L.L. Bean fly-fishing product line."

Whitlock's fly-fishing, fly-tying, and artistry are all self-taught skills and seemed to come as naturally to him as making friends. Born in

Muskogee, he graduated from Northeastern Oklahoma State University in Tahlequah with degrees in chemistry, physics and biology before becoming a research chemist in the petroleum industry. But his skills as an angler and artist led him out of that career at age 30.

For the bulk of his career, Arkansas' White River was his base of operations, which included a seven-year research effort that resulted in the invention of the Whitlock-Vibert Box

System, an in-stream salmonoid egg incubator and nursery device credited for boosting the White's brown trout to world-record fame. The boxes have been used around the world in trout and salmon species conservation projects, including in Oklahoma's Lower Mountain Fork River. ♡



The fly-fishing "power couple" of Dave and Emily Whitlock made a name for themselves around the world. Here they are after catching a golden dorado in Brazil.

Conservation

Fun Outdoors!

Have you ever preserved a snowflake? It's easy using microscope slides, thin superglue, cover slips, and a day with light snowfall (not a snowstorm). Chill everything in a freezer about 30 minutes. Go outside and catch a few flakes on the slide. Put a drop of superglue over each flake, then lightly drop a cover slip on top. Put the slide in a freezer for at least a week to cure completely. You've preserved a snowflake!

Hunting Tip

Have you ever wanted to learn about trapping? This time of year is prime trapping time! And this year, the only license you need if you are a resident 17 or younger is the new annual youth super hunting license. It allows you to trap year-round without any other licenses or permits. Ask around to find someone who will take you out and teach you about trapping. You might even earn some money by selling some furs!

Fishing Tip

It's trout time in Oklahoma! This non-native fish loves cold water. So the Wildlife Department stocks trout in eight different fishing areas during the winter months. (And two of those areas are actually stocked with trout all year long!) Grab some light tackle and get your mom or dad to join you for a fun wintertime fishing trip. You might be able to enjoy some tasty trout fillets for dinner!

for Kids!

Word Search: Oklahoma's Rivers

S	H	H	K	O	Y	Q	H	R	J	H	Y	W	O	E	Y	C	I	T	T
A	P	C	R	A	Y	F	I	S	H	K	F	F	Q	X	B	N	G	T	F
N	U	D	Z	S	Y	C	D	X	D	Q	A	B	F	D	L	T	T	W	I
D	A	T	J	B	D	S	N	W	N	Z	E	A	D	J	U	J	Z	N	V
B	N	Y	A	E	E	R	T	F	U	W	J	O	G	R	G	E	T	P	H
A	P	M	S	A	R	M	A	N	G	K	V	S	N	N	L	X	Q	W	A
R	Z	I	G	V	Z	T	L	G	E	S	V	U	B	A	E	V	A	E	P
U	N	N	R	E	T	A	W	U	O	R	B	O	J	L	C	Z	P	N	F
D	J	M	O	R	T	K	L	U	D	N	R	C	O	A	C	W	E	Q	K
Z	K	N	F	F	J	L	S	I	Q	T	F	U	R	Q	Q	V	U	J	P
T	G	K	L	H	P	M	V	B	A	X	H	L	C	L	F	G	M	N	F
T	V	F	S	I	J	X	A	F	Q	T	T	L	Y	S	O	I	L	U	L
L	A	K	K	K	N	M	E	W	R	E	T	T	O	I	V	G	S	Z	I
Y	X	N	N	X	C	K	L	D	N	D	Q	A	C	I	P	C	U	H	B
I	S	L	A	R	M	O	B	Y	K	N	L	T	C	U	G	L	H	O	Z
W	J	E	B	C	M	U	R	J	U	E	X	G	V	I	O	G	C	X	P

Find and circle these things that you might see in or around a river in Oklahoma.

Bank
Cattail
Dragonfly
Rocks

Beaver
Crayfish
Fish
Sandbar

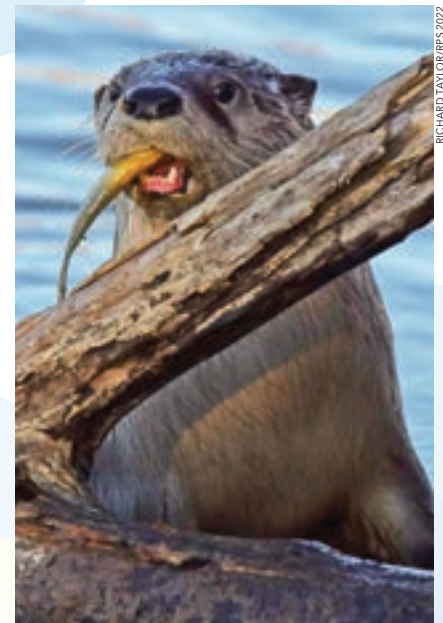
Canoe
Current
Otter
Water

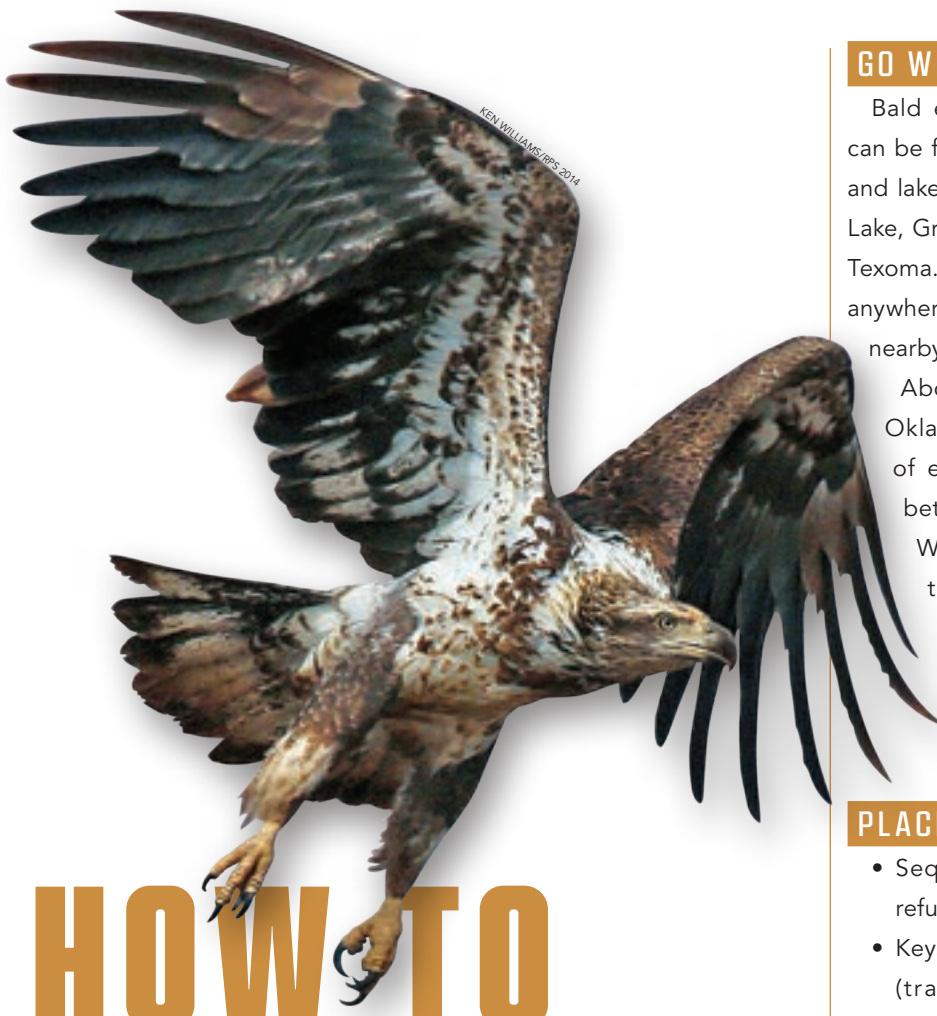
COOL FACTS About River Otters:

- This playful, lively animal loves water and land equally.
- They are slender, dark brown mammals with gold highlighting their face and chest.
- They can be up to 4 feet long and weigh between 15 and 20 pounds.
- River otters can live 15 to 20 years.
- Flexible spines make them perfectly suited for swimming.
- Wherever you find beavers, there are likely river otters in the same area.
- The river otter's nostrils and ears close when it is submerged.
- It has a very thick, waterproof coat that keeps water away from the skin.
- Their diet includes fish, frogs, turtles, crayfish, and sometimes the eggs of ground-nesting birds.
- Females give birth to two or three offspring, which are born helpless.
- Oklahoma's current hunting/trapping season for river otters opened Dec. 1, 2024, and will close Feb. 28, 2025. The season bag limit is 6.



Color a Critter: River Otter





HOW TO HONE YOUR EAGLE EYES

**BY JENA DONNELL,
COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION SPECIALIST**

Oklahoma's bald eagle numbers peak between November and February, making winter the prime season for eagle watching. Here are some tips to help stack the odds in your favor if you want to go out for bald eagle viewing.

GO WHERE THE EAGLES ARE

Bald eagles are primarily fish eaters and can be found near many of Oklahoma's rivers and lakes. Popular viewing spots include Kaw Lake, Grand Lake O' the Cherokees and Lake Texoma. But bald eagles can be spotted most anywhere across the state as long as food is nearby and available.

About 250 pairs of bald eagles stay in Oklahoma year-round, but the majority of eagles seen in Oklahoma split time between here and more northern states.

When fishing waters freeze over in those northern states, the migratory bald eagles fly south to enjoy the milder winters and more open waters of Oklahoma and other southern states.

PLACES TO VIEW EAGLES

- Sequoyah National Wildlife (fws.gov/refuge/sequoyah).
- Keystone Lake and Keystone State Park (travelok.com/state-parks/keystone-state-park).
- Lake Thunderbird (travelok.com/state-parks/lake-thunderbird-state-park).
- Chickasaw National Recreation Area (nps.gov/chic/index.htm).
- Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge (fws.gov/refuge/salt-plains).
- Arcadia Lake (edmondok.gov/338/Arcadia-Lake).
- Quartz Mountain State Park (travelok.com/state-parks/quartz-mountain-state-park).
- Black Mesa State Park and Nature Preserve (travelok.com/state-parks/black-mesa-state-park-nature-preserve).
- Grand Lake State Park (travelok.com/state-parks/twin-bridges-area-at-grand-lake-state-park).
- Illinois River (travelok.com/listings/view.profile/id.3759).
- Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve (nature.org/en-us/get-involved/

how-to-help/places-we-protect/tallgrass-prairie-preserve).

- Kaw Lake (swt.usace.army.mil/Locations/Tulsa-District-Lakes/Oklahoma/Kaw-Lake).

BE PREPARED TO BUNDLE UP AND WAIT

Depending on the weather, winter eagle watching in Oklahoma could be enjoyed in a long-sleeved shirt and jeans or may require your heaviest winter gear. Wearing layers and keeping a scarf and gloves handy can help you adjust to the varying temperature and wind conditions.

Depending on the location, eagle watching could be enjoyed from a warm car or require a walk along the shoreline or trail. Be sure to find a safe place to pull off the road if eagle watching from a vehicle.

Depending on the birds, your eagle watching trip could be successful in a matter of minutes or hours or may require returning another day. Time your trips for early morning or late afternoon to increase your chances of seeing these fishing raptors.

BEST TIME TO VIEW AND WHAT TO BRING

- Sightings increase as early as November and peak in January and February.
- Look near lakes and rivers as eagles are primarily fish eaters and typically nest in forested areas near large bodies of water.
- Eagles can be spotted during the day but the best time to view eagles is around sunrise or sunset.
- Wear warm, neutral-colored clothing.
- Bring binoculars, a camera, and a field guide.

SCAN THE TREELINES

Eagles spend a majority of their time perched high in a tree. When you first arrive at your eagle-watching destination, scan the surrounding trees for the contrasting white heads and tails with dark brown bodies of adult eagles. Eagles under the age of 4

years lack the characteristic white head and tail and may be more difficult to spot. Once you've scanned the area for adult eagles, inspect the same area for the large, dark-bodied juveniles.


Pack a pair of binoculars or a spotting scope to turn the odds of spotting an eagle in your favor.

ADDITIONAL HISTORY AND INFORMATION

- U.S. bald eagle populations declined in the mid-1900s and reached a low of 417 pairs in 1963.
- Populations began to increase after banning the pesticide DDT and through the federal listing of the bald eagle as an endangered and threatened species in the 1970s.
- The bald eagle was removed from the federal list of endangered and threatened species in 2007.
- The breeding population is now estimated at more than 316,000. 🦅

MARK ROBINSON/RFP 2023





"If there are no dogs
in heaven, then when
I die I want to go
where they went."
— Will Rogers

Liberty, a Brittany spaniel
belonging to game
warden Dru Polk. (No
turtles were harmed in
the making of this photo!)

The Dashing Dogs of ODWC

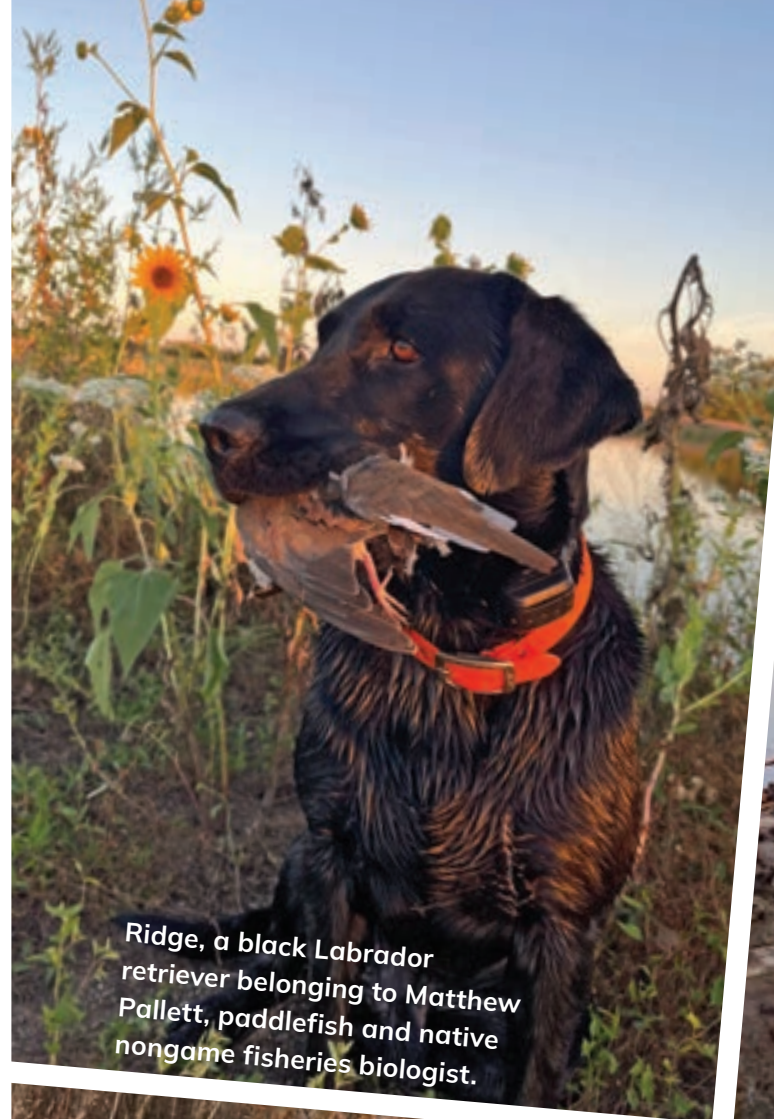
By Heather
Del Moral,
Communication
and Education
Specialist

There's a reason dogs are called man's best friend, especially when it comes to hunting. Many hunters choose dogs as their companions because they fetch doves, flush pheasants and quail, tree furbearers, dive into icy water for waterfowl, and so much more.

Wildlife Department employees are passionate about the work they do, and plenty of them participate in hunting in their leisure

time. So when we asked to see some of their hunting dog photos, we figured several would be shared. And they were!

Just as we pass on the tradition of hunting to friends and family, it's also a great time to think about passing on the tradition of hunting with dogs. Here are some of the images from our ODWC family of their canine companions in the field. 🐾



Ridge, a black Labrador retriever belonging to Matthew Pallett, paddlefish and native nongame fisheries biologist.



Stormy, a field-bred English cocker belonging to game warden Marshall Reigh.



Carson, German short-haired pointer, "upland game technician" belonging to Tell Judkins, upland game biologist.



Nash, German short-haired pointer mix, belonging to Colby and Elaine Gainer, fisheries biologists.

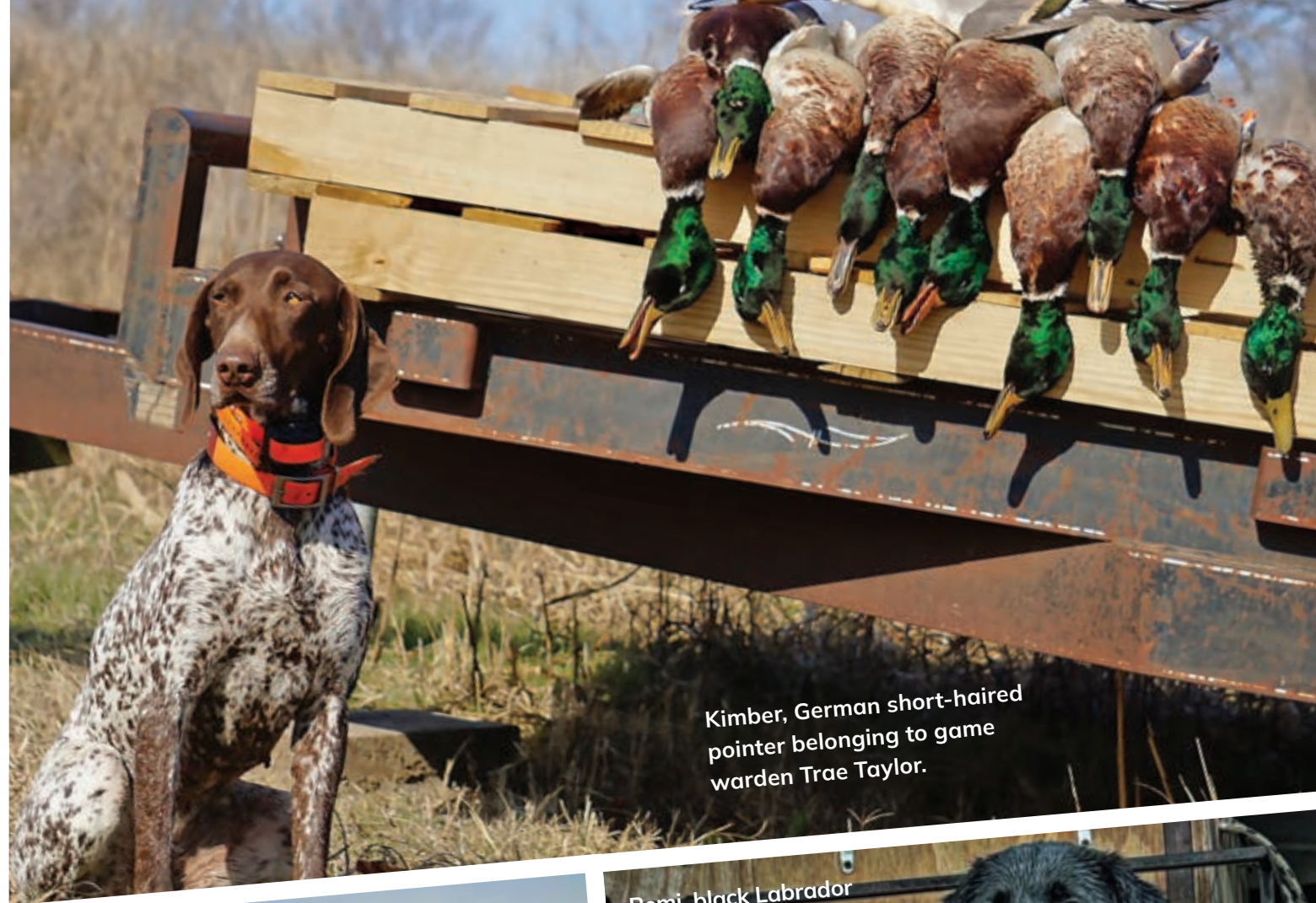


Limit, a German short-haired pointer, with her "mom" Amanda Thomas, shooting range coordinator.



Snipe, pointer, with "dad" Wade Free, ODWC director.

"The average dog is a nicer person than the average person." — Andy Rooney



Kimber, German short-haired pointer belonging to game warden Trae Taylor.



Summit, golden retriever belonging to Michael Bergin, senior communication and education specialist.



Remi, black Labrador retriever belonging to game warden Dylan Jones.



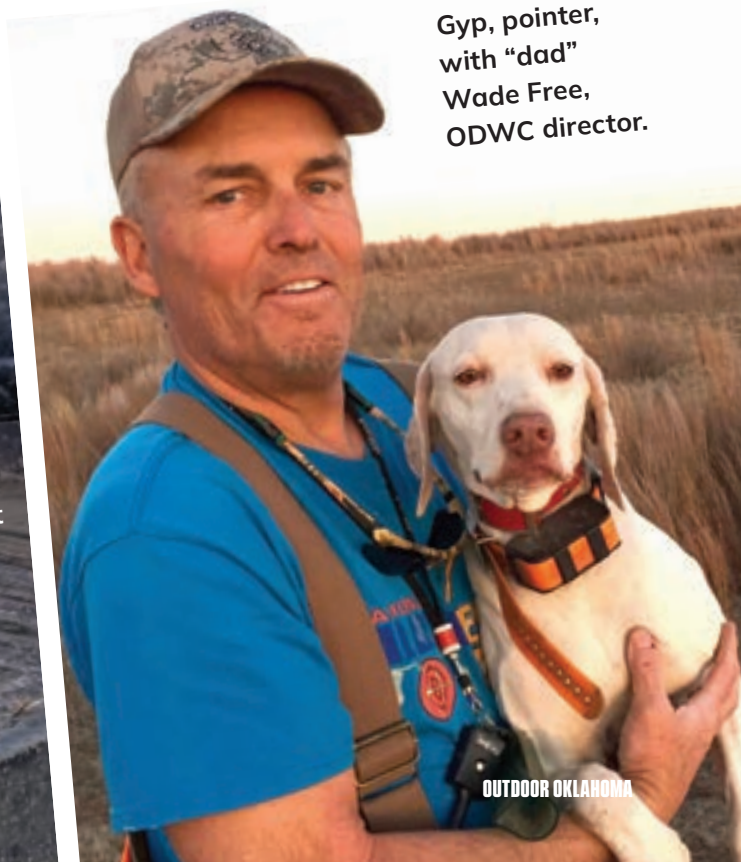
Ygritte (Gritty), a Belgian shepherd belonging to Jason Schooley, senior fisheries biologist.



Casta, a drahthaar belonging to game warden Tucker Blackburn.



Ruger, a Boykin spaniel belonging to fisheries biologist Michael Hollie.



Gyp, pointer, with "dad" Wade Free, ODWC director.

"Having a dog will bless you with many of the happiest days of your life, and one of the worst." — Unknown

Star on point as brother Buck honors, German short-haired pointers belonging to Wade Free, ODWC director.

VENISON

WHERE HUNTING AND HEALTHY EATING MEET

By Heather Del Moral, Communication and Education Specialist

Numerous reasons exist to go deer hunting: the adventure, the tradition, the opportunity to connect with nature, and the nutritious meat it can provide. With grocery prices going up, I'm especially eager to fill my freezer with deer meat this year.

With a family of four, having nutritious, self-harvested meat gives me peace of mind knowing we're eating healthy and saving money. This led me to explore the health benefits of deer meat. Here are some things I discovered, and I hope it encourages you to enjoy the outdoors, harvest venison, and prepare it for your family.

NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

Venison, a red meat that's low in calories and high in protein, is a nutritional powerhouse. The nutrients in venison support muscle growth and repair, and energy levels, all very beneficial for active lifestyles.

Venison contains L-Glutamine, an amino acid that helps build muscles, removes excess ammonia (waste) from the body, and boosts metabolism. In addition, venison is packed with B vitamins, zinc, iron, and essential fatty acids, which are crucial for immune function, cardiovascular health, and cell repair.

Feeding farm-raised animals corn and grain increases total fat and omega-6 fatty acid levels in the meat. According to the Linus Pauling Institute, omega-6 fatty acids elevate inflammation markers in the body.

Unlike many farm-raised animals, wild venison doesn't contain added hormones, resulting in a more natural nutrient profile. Animals that feed freely on a natural diet tend to have higher omega-3 fatty acids and conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), both of which are linked to anti-inflammatory benefits and help fortify the immune system. Venison also provides a higher nutrient density, supporting a healthy diet.

For those who embrace outdoor living and sustainable practices, venison is a nutritious, eco-conscious choice to support an active lifestyle.

(Resources: Overview of Inflammation/Linus Pauling Institute/Oregon State University, extension.psu.edu/venison-is-it-for-you.)

PROCESSING YOUR OWN DEER

The task might seem daunting at first, but don't let that stop you from processing your own deer. There are plenty of benefits! Not only will you save money over time, but you will also know exactly where your meat comes from and ensure that no part of the deer goes to waste. Plus, learning this new skill can be very rewarding, and it's a great opportunity to get the family involved. Kids love to help, and it's an excellent way to teach them about deer anatomy. The Wildlife Department's website has a lot of great resources to get you started.

TIME TO COOK!

Venison is an incredibly versatile meat, perfect for everything from steaks and sausages to meatballs, stews, casseroles and more. You can use venison in any recipe that calls for beef or other red meat. You can even save the bones to make a nutrient-rich bone broth.



Slicing venison backstrap on a cutting board.

Venison is known for its rich, distinct flavor and lean texture. Cooking venison low and slow can really bring out its full-flavored taste. You can mix bacon, beef or pork fat into your ground venison so that burgers and other meals will be juicy and flavorful.

There are seemingly countless venison recipes available online, and YouTube is full of helpful cooking tutorials. No matter how you prepare it, you'll enjoy the pride that comes from knowing the journey from field to table that is behind your meal.

SIMPLIFIED LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

It is easier than ever to determine the appropriate licenses for deer hunting. New this year, resident and nonresident adult hunters need only an annual hunting license and a single deer license for the season they plan to hunt. Youths 17 and younger need only an annual youth super hunting license. For more information about hunting licenses, deer bag limits and hunting regulations, go to wildlifedepartment.com and click "Licensing" in the top menu bar.

HUNTERS AGAINST HUNTER

Hunters who legally harvest a deer during any of this year's deer seasons can donate the meat to feed hungry Oklahomans. Simply deliver the deer to the nearest participating meat processor after the deer is reported via E-Check.

To help with processing expenses, each donor is asked to contribute a tax-deductible \$10 to assist with the program.

Hunters wanting to help even more may choose to pay the entire processing fee, which is a tax-deductible donation, as well. Ground venison will then be distributed to the needy through a network of qualified, charitable organizations.

OKLAHOMA DEER SHARE

Hunters play a vital role in helping maintain a healthy deer population. A key goal for a healthy herd is an even buck-to-doe ratio, making antlerless harvest critical. In order to help supplement hunters who want to help harvest more does and share that harvest with others, ODWC has set up the Oklahoma Deer Share program to help



Searing venison backstrap in an iron skillet.

hunters coordinate transferring their harvest to someone interested in obtaining fresh deer meat.

We recommend those planning to harvest a deer post their information on this page before their hunt so someone interested can hopefully reach out to them before the hunt and make a commitment to accept the harvest. This way, upon a successful hunt, they can quickly transfer the fresh harvest to the interested party, who can then quickly process the deer themselves or deliver it to a local processor.

BASIC CUTS OF DEER



BACK STRAPS AND INNER TENDERLOINS

We group these two cuts together as they are generally cooked in the same manner. Make sure to cut away the silver skin from the backstraps!

Any way you cook a beef steak will work nicely with these venison cuts. The main thing to remember is that venison backstraps have no fat and really shouldn't be cooked past medium.

- Drop half a backstrap into a bag of your favorite marinade for a couple of days and grill to an internal temperature of 135 degrees, let it rest, then slice across the grain in quarter-inch thick pieces. Add a sprinkle of your favorite coarse ground steak seasoning and enjoy!
- Sauté inner tenderloins with garlic, butter and seasonings in a skillet on the day of the harvest to celebrate the hunt.
- Use the backstraps sliced thinly and tenderized, any way you would use tenderized beef.

HIND QUARTERS

Hind quarters are much larger than fronts with bigger muscle groups, which opens them up to a lot more uses. Take the hind quarters off the animal at the ball and socket joint in the hip and divide the leg into the different muscle groups. Wrap

each muscle individually, and then you can use them as you want. Remember to take the silver skin off before cooking.

- They make excellent chicken fried steaks when sliced a half-inch thick and then tenderized.
- Slice thinly to create everyone's favorite: jerky.
- Cook whole as a roast.
- Cube into stew meat.
- Cut across the grain $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick and grill to 135 degrees.
- Cut into strips for fajitas
- Slice thinly to be used in any Asian dish like Mongolian beef, etc.

FRONT SHOULDERS

These have a lot of connective tissue and can sometimes have damage and hemorrhage from bullets or broadheads.

Make sure you cut away all of the damaged meat.

After that, you can cut the shanks away at the elbow and slow-cook them together as you would a roast, leaving the bone in; cutting the boned-out meat into chunks for stew; or cutting the meat away from the bone and using the boneless meat for grinding.

TRIMMINGS

This is all the stuff you cut off that you can't make into a steak or roast, etc. This is usually best ground up for anything you might use ground beef for. Grinders aren't that expensive online, or you can take it to a local processor and pay them to grind and package.

Chili should be ground very lean on a coarse setting.

Anything used for hamburger applications you can grind with pork or beef fat to help it hold together and not dry out.



A healthier version of a cheeseburger is the result of using ground venison.

COURTESY DAVE TESTER/1577 PRODUCTIONS

VENISON RECIPES



HEATHER DEL MORAL/CDWC

AIR FRYER TERIYAKI VENISON PINEAPPLE KABOBS

Ingredients

- 2 pounds venison, cubed
- 1 pineapple, cut into chunks
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into chunks
- 1 red onion, cut into chunks
- 1 cup teriyaki sauce

Directions

- Marinate venison cubes in teriyaki sauce for at least two hours.
- Thread venison, pineapple, bell peppers, and onions onto skewers.
- Preheat air fryer at 380°F, then cook kabobs for six minutes, turn kabobs over and cook an additional six minutes.
- Serve with rice or another side of your choosing.



HEATHER DEL MORAL/CDWC

VENISON BOWL

Ingredients

- ¼ cup brown sugar, packed
- ¼ cup reduced sodium soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- ½ teaspoon crushed red-pepper flakes, or more to taste
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 bag (10 ounces) steamable frozen stir fry vegetables
- 1 pound ground venison
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced (optional)
- 1 tablespoon spicy mayo or yum yum sauce (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon sesame seeds (optional)

Directions

- In a small bowl, whisk together brown sugar, soy sauce, sesame oil, red pepper flakes and ginger.
- Steam vegetables per directions on bag.
- Heat vegetable oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add ground venison and cook until browned.
- Stir in soy sauce mixture and green onions until well-combined, allowing to simmer until heated through, about 2 minutes.
- Serve immediately over white or brown rice, top with steamed vegetables, spicy may or yum yum sauce, garnish with green onion and sesame seeds, if desired.



REFLECTIONS OF A BOWHUNTER



BY NEIL KEYES

I SAT PURPOSELY STILL, but I felt awkwardly exposed. Not much I could do about it, either. My location — at the base of a small, lone tree — was my only alternative for bowhunting an active scrape I'd located the day before. I had no cover around me and I could be silhouetted from several different angles. In my favor, though, were the wind, sun, and a slight ridge that gave me a good vantage point for enjoying a spectacular fall morning.

An absolutely gorgeous sunrise unfolded before me. It was a bit cool but nevertheless perfect for hunting. Clear and almost still, the day began with the hazy mystique of a light ground fog. The rays of the rising sun slowly searched for the openings they needed to filter down into the woodland scene. Autumn trees began to glow in all shades of red, yellow and orange. I sat totally entranced by the beauty of this pristine, natural world.

"How can it get any better?" I thought, answering myself immediately with the image of a nice buck appearing at the nearby scrape. "Naw," I smiled, trying to convince myself of a new line of reasoning. "A deer would only break the serenity, cause an adrenaline surge, increase my heart rate — who needs it? This is just fine the way it is."

It was then that I heard a strange clicking noise from somewhere behind me. It didn't take long before my curiosity got the best of me and I slowly scrunched around for a look. At that moment, my hunt did get better. In a little valley below me was one of the most phenomenally beautiful sights I've ever seen. The scene was backlit by the morning sun, which made the dew-covered grasses twinkle and glisten. The colorful leaves were rimmed with bright light, like a fringe of sparkling diamonds. The ground fog glowed pale gold. A meandering creek shined with the brilliant reflection of the day-break sky. And right in the middle of it all were two magnificent whitetail bucks, sparring gingerly, rapping the tips of their antlers together, making that clicking sound I'd heard.

Both deer had symmetrical racks: one an eight-pointer, the other a 10. They'd lower their heads and push their antlers together. They'd turn their heads side to side, each tapping its long tines against the heavy main beams of the other. They pushed each other back and forth several times before parting and stepping back again to stare, stomp and snort. Then the whole process started over.

The ground fog sometimes obscured their legs, making their movements ghostlike and ethereal. When they snorted, I could see their breath steam from their nostrils. The drama, beauty and uniqueness of the scene was awesome, almost hard to believe, like something from a movie. Sadly, it lasted only a few short minutes.

The bucks suddenly raised their heads and walked off in different directions. Both seemed to saunter as if proud and cocky, as if they'd really shown their opponent a thing or two. In a moment, they were gone, disappearing into the oaks.

I sat transfixed, totally mesmerized, almost afraid to move or think for fear that I might erase the magic of the moment. I didn't want it to end, but I knew that I would never forget it. And it was then when I realized I honestly didn't care if a deer ever appeared at the scrape where I was hunting. I realized that the scene I'd just witnessed was an example of the real reason why I bow hunt.

That memorable morning was 17 years ago.

I've managed to take a number of archery deer since that day, some of which provided me with more thrills and personal satisfactions than I could ever relate. But when I stop to reflect on my best bowhunting memories — all the amazing encounters and heart-stopping action — I still think of those fighting bucks. I probably always will.

The outdoor world is a truly wondrous place. Archery season, even more so than Oklahoma's other deer seasons, is a chance to learn and experience much of what this world has to offer. To hunt with a bow is to invite limitations on yourself, to increase the challenge. By design, a bowhunter is forced to develop more refined skills, patience and understanding of himself and his quarry. Through their own capabilities and ingenuity, bowhunters often must work to find a way to succeed. By hunting within these constraints, archery deer hunters begin to understand a deeper appreciation of the outdoor world. This in turn translates to more meaningful personal enrichment at the end of a hunt.

Success in bowhunting can be a rather elusive pursuit. It's not always measured in terms of game brought to bag. More often it's the thrill of seeing game, a close call, or just being there for the opportunity. For bowhunters who genuinely apply themselves, there are many





OKLAHOMA'S DEER
ARCHERY SEASON RUNS
THROUGH JAN. 15, 2025.



sources for absorbing enough energy and inspiration to go again; to try again.

A few years ago, my son, Tim, and I experienced a great hunt that would become another of my most fond memories and inspirations. All of my hunts with family, whether they're with my sons, dad or wife, seem to take on extra zest and vibrancy. But this particular hunt had all the classic elements, as well.

We had spent all summer tuning and practicing with our gear. The entire month before season opened, we shot broadheads only. We had even participated in an organized shoot that closely simulated hunting conditions. Despite technological advancements over the years, archers are still disadvantaged compared to other deer hunters. To be successful, archers often must rely on a higher level of knowledge, woodsmanship and patience. The rewards, in turn, provide many with a deeper satisfaction.

By the time season opened, no target was too small. Our favorite trick was severing the stem of a daisy at 20 yards. We were definitely honed!

We had made several scouting trips to the hunt area, a fantastic piece of overgrown woodland in western Oklahoma, and we had a good idea of likely feeding and bedding areas, and the most-used trails that connected them. All of these were noted on a topographic map. There were several ridges cropping up from a bottomland that ran diagonally across the area, and along the creek was a veritable jungle of vegetation. We found tracks, trails, droppings, rubs and even a few small scrapes situated about, and we placed our stands in strategic, concealed places.

By Saturday morning of the third weekend of season, however, neither of us had seen a deer. Something was wrong. I wondered if the deer were using the bottom only at night, or maybe we just hadn't located the core area of activity yet. That afternoon, map in hand, we scouted the ridges.

We found a different kind of habitat. Scrub oaks and squatty blackjacks were laden with acorns but offered no chance for a treestand. At the top of the slope, though, were some larger trees with overhanging limbs — the kind of place where deer hunters would hope to find scrapes. And sure enough, shaded beneath the branches, were some huge ones up to four yards across. They were freshly pawed and wet. I could actually smell the odor of deer in the

air. We relocated our stands, confident we had found a honey hole.

At 5:30 that evening, I heard a grunt. I slowly peered around, and there it was, about 75 yards away: a big-bodied 10-pointer. Its head was down as if trailing, and it was slowly working my direction. My adrenaline rushed. My heart leaped into my throat, and I had to remind myself to breath. Calm down! The buck came closer and closer, ever so slowly. I raised my bow and got ready.

The buck was in range now, maybe 35 yards. I pulled to full draw, but I was a mess. My mind was racing, my pulse was pounding, and my knees were wobbling. My mouth was so dry I couldn't swallow. My brain was screaming for the rest of my body to cooperate. Somehow I managed to remember my bow sights and line up the orange, 30-yard bead with a spot just behind the buck's shoulder.

The deer raised its head and looked around. I almost released but waited. I knew my odds would be better when it lowered its head again. Only my weeks and months of practice held me together for the next few moments. Without practice, I never would have had the strength to wait for a better shot. Finally the deer relaxed, dropped its head and prepared to take a step.

My arrow flew true. The buck went down with-in sight, about 60 yards away. My son appeared, excited, "Did you get him? I heard you shoot."

I'll never forget nodding and pointing down the hill. "Yes, he's right down there." That night in camp was really special. We couldn't stop talking about what a great day it had been. But just like other hunts I've experienced, this one also found a way to get even better. The next morning, Tim got a deer, too, a nice buck that was working down the same ridge.

Bowhunting has provided me with some of my life's finest memories, the kinds of things I ponder and reflect on when I'm perched in a treestand in some gorgeous autumn woodland. Each year when the leaves blush red, yellow and orange, I have no trouble finding the inspiration that takes me back to the deer woods. And regardless of whether an arrow ever leaves my string, I know I'll be a richer man for having done so. 🏹

Neil Keyes is a retired Outdoor Oklahoma producer, writer and photographer. This article originally appeared in 1993.

OWCF Helps Fund Schools' Outdoor Curriculum

Partnerships have always been keys to expanding Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's reach into schools large and small across the state. Funding from the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation this fiscal year is adding to the dollars that ODWC has been committing for the past 20 years as the department continues to provide equipment kits to schools that want to add outdoor education to their curriculum.

Today, when a school engages at the high school level with the entire suite of education programs offered by ODWC, they receive over \$12,000 in equipment kits and curriculum for Fishing in the Schools, Archery in the Schools, Varsity Archery, Explore Bowfishing, Explore Bowhunting, Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports Program, and Hunter Education.

The Foundation provided \$40,625 this year for additional equipment kits including 50 Fishing in the Schools kits and nine kits for other programs. ODWC matches every dollar from the Foundation with \$3 from federal Wildlife Restoration or Sport Fish Restoration dollars. So, the grand total was \$162,500 in equipment kits purchased for schools beginning ODWC education programs this year.

Scholastic Shooting Sports is available to junior high schools

as well. All of the other programs previously listed (except Varsity Archery) are available to schools with grades 4 -12 via the department's grant and teacher training programs.

The Foundation operates solely from donations, fund-raising events and outside grant dollars. Anyone wishing to make a donation may visit to the Foundation website at <https://www.okwildlifeconservation.org>.

Engaging students in outdoor life skills programs during the regular school day is essential to maintain and grow interest in hunting, fishing and recreational archery and shooting sports. Because of the Foundation's contribution to these programs, tens of thousands of Oklahoma schoolkids will be introduced to what might end up being a lifetime activity. These programs have a proven track record for engaging students who often are not involved in other school-related activities.

Schools interested in started ODWC's outdoor education programs should contact Communication and Education Specialist Kelly Boyer at Kelly.Boyer@odwc.ok.gov. The next round of teacher training courses will begin in May and will end in September.

— Colin Berg, OWCF



Elementary school students learn about rod and reel during an Oklahoma Fishing in the Schools program.

Foundation's Call of the Wild Gala Tickets On Sale

Tickets are now available for the **2025 Call of the Wild Gala**, an unforgettable evening set from 6 to 9:30 p.m. Feb. 28 at the iconic National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City.

This annual fund-raising event celebrates the vital work of the **Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation** in preserving and promoting our state's rich outdoor heritage.

Guests will enjoy a delightful night filled with live music, including a performance by the award-winning group The Great Divide, as they mingle and bid on an array of exciting items in both our live and silent auctions.

Attendees will have the chance to win fantastic prizes through our auction items, all while supporting crucial conservation efforts that empower the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to maximize federal funding for vital projects at an incredible 3:1 and even 9:1 ratio. Together, we will honor the contributions of outstanding conservationists, enjoy cocktails and a delicious meal, and make a lasting impact on the wild resources we cherish.

This year's Hall of Fame honorees are Larry and Brenda Potterfield,


owners of MidwayUSA and founders of MidwayUSA Foundation. Their selfless and generous contribu-

tions to youth shooting sports have catapulted opportunities for youths across the county, including here in Oklahoma.

"I am looking forward to meeting you at this year's event and hearing more about your own passion for Oklahoma and our great outdoors," said OWCF Executive Director Sean McCabe. "Your sponsorship or attendance at this year's gala will not only provide critical matching funds that allow the wildlife department to leverage federal monies for wildlife and fisheries conservation projects throughout Oklahoma, but will also help establish long-term and sustainable support through endowments that will continue to fuel the passion of Oklahoma outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen for generations.

"Your tax-deductible gift will enable us to support the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation in a bigger way and

bring projects to Oklahoma more quickly."

To become a Call of the Wild Gala sponsor or to buy tickets, visit onecau.se/owcfgala2025 or scan the QR code. 



Brenda and Larry Potterfield will be honored with the fourth induction into the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Hall of Fame during the 2025 Call of the Wild Gala on Feb. 28.



THE OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION (OWCF) is engaged in a five-year program to raise \$5.2 million to further the strategic mission of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Since the Wildlife Department has operated on a limited budget for more than 100 years and doesn't receive appropriated state tax dollars, funds raised by the Foundation are among the best methods to more rapidly advance the Department's strategic plan. Because many ODWC projects qualify for a 3-to-1 or 9-to-1 federal dollar match, donations to OWCF can be multiplied and bring more and better projects to Oklahoma more quickly.

Funds raised by OWCF support wildlife research and management, multi-year conservation projects, community outreach programs, and outdoor recreation projects. OWCF's mission cannot be achieved without the support of community partners, philanthropic foundations, and donations from individuals who want to make a difference for future generations.

All donations are tax-deductible. To learn more about OWCF and how to help, go to www.OKwildlifeconservation.org, www.facebook.com/OKWildlifeFoundation, or email Sean McCabe at smccabe@okwcf.org, or call (918) 323-5566.



OUTDOOR STORE

license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com

Sign in or shop online as a guest. Some items also available in person at ODWC headquarters, 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd. in Oklahoma City.

****Prices listed on these pages do not include \$3 online ordering convenience fee.**



NEW ODWC LOGO DRINKWARE

Double-wall high-grade stainless steel 16-oz coffee mugs and 20-oz tumblers made by Yukon with DuraGrip powder coat finish featuring the new ODWC arrowhead logo. Tumblers come in navy, white, and bottomland camo; mugs come in olive drab and navy. They are vacuum-insulated and BPA-free. (Online sales only.) — \$20

Outdoor Gear



YUKON FLOATING GUN CASE

Welded waterproof construction, thick foam padding for protection, 500d tarpaulin exterior shell, carry strap and handle, universal fit for shotgun or scoped rifle. (Online sales only.) — \$70

YUKON ODWC BACKPACK COOLER

Double Duty — Works as Cooler or Padded Gear Bag, Keeps Ice For Days, Air Tight Zipper, Rugged Welded Construction, 20 can with Ice capacity. (Ships separate from other Outdoor Store items) — \$140.00

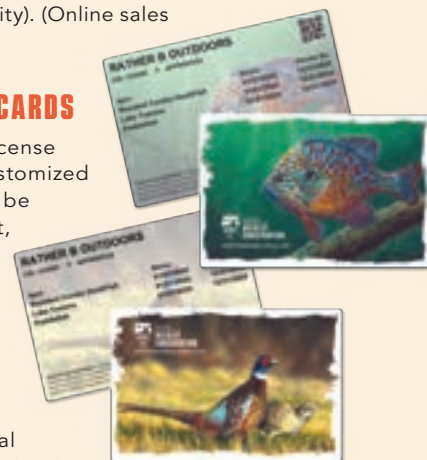


NEW OUTDOOR OKLAHOMA CAPS

These sleek fabric caps sport the latest Outdoor Oklahoma logo design! They are the Richardson 112 model, mid-pro shape, pro-curved visor, adjustable snap-back, 60% cotton/40% polyester. Various colors and styles will be available (subject to availability). (Online sales only.) — \$20

DURABLE COLLECTOR'S CARDS

Every hunting and fishing license holder can upgrade to a customized hard plastic card that won't be damaged by water, sun, dirt, or regular wear and tear like paper documents. Cards hold customer and license information on one side; the other side features artwork from Oklahoma artists that changes periodically. Several designs available. (Account sign-in required.) — \$6



OKLAHOMA HABITAT DONOR WINDOW DECALS

Show your support of the Wildlife Department's conservation efforts with these striking window decals. — \$10 each





WILDLIFE LICENSE PLATES

Dress up your vehicle while showing your support of our great state's wildlife resources by getting a wildlife license plate. Nine Wildlife Conservation Plates are available to serve as your regular, rear-bumper license plate. The plates cost just \$40 (original or replacement) or \$36.55 (renewals) above your regular annual registration fee with proceeds going to Oklahoma's Wildlife Diversity Program. The forms are available at local tag agencies, or online at tinyurl.com/WildTags.

OKLAHOMA WATERFOWL HUNTING STAMP

Oklahoma "duck stamps" are always popular with collectors and hunters. While each year's stamp features a different handsome design sure to add appeal to any stamp collection, funds from stamp sales are used for many kinds of waterfowl management projects. Specify year when ordering. — \$21 or \$31

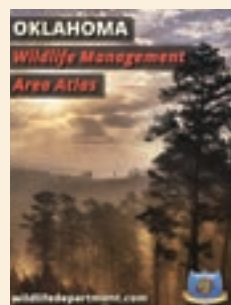


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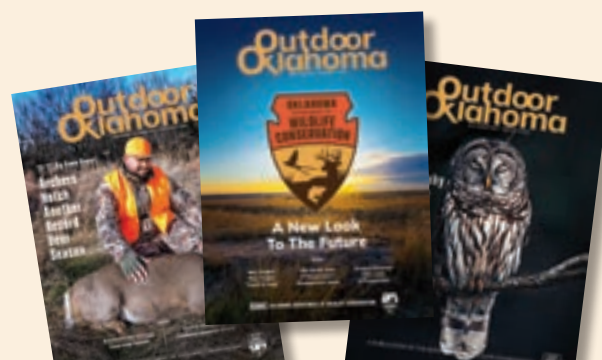
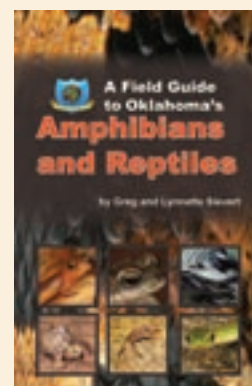
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MALLARD

BY KAYLEEN SUGIANTO, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION INTERN

A common waterfowl species, the mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is a quite familiar sight to many observers across the country, thanks to the male's gleaming, iridescent-green head during most of the year.

With their long hefty bodies, wide bills, and a rear that rides high off the water's surface, they are an ideal representation of a "dabbling duck" — those that tip their bodies vertically in the water to reach underwater

plants, almost never diving.

Male mallards, known as drakes or greenheads, have a dark, green head, black tail with curled feather tufts, and a bright yellow bill. They have a soft, gray

body with a brown breast and darker rear.

Females, known as hens or Susies, along with juvenile are mottled brown with an orange-brown bill.

All mallards feature a blue speculum patch with white borders atop the trailing edge of their inner wings, and orange legs with webbed toes.

Mallards, whether local residents or migrating wild birds, can be seen eating or resting in about every freshwater wetland area, natural or artificial, at various times of the year. They frequent ponds and marshes, roadside ditches and grain fields. While Oklahoma is a suitable location for mallards to stay year-round, they are much more common from November to January, as the Sooner State is within their wintering range.

Mallards are social and can act relatively

tame. They are adaptable to urban areas and flock with other groups of mallards and other dabbling duck species.

A fairly large duck, mallard adults average 20-26 inches long, weigh 2 to 3 pounds, and have wingspans up to a yard across. They eat a wide range of food items, including aquatic invertebrates and vegetation, and agricultural crops like peanuts. They are fast fliers at up to 55 mph, and they typically live five to 10 years in the wild.

Mallards form new breeding pairs each year. The process begins during fall migration. Mallard courtship behaviors vary, including rhythmic head-bobbing, grunt-whistling, and males pulling their wings and tails up to display their purple-blue speculums while compressing their bodies.

The wild breeding pair remain together through winter and migrate in spring to natural breeding grounds in the northern United States and Canada. A nest site is selected, and the hen will lay 8-13 eggs. After almost a month, the fuzzy down-covered ducklings hatch and are ready to leave the nest within 13-16 hours.

At the end of the breeding season in late summer, mallards shed their flight feathers and molt into a faded brown eclipse plumage that makes them harder to identify and helps them hide from predators.

Greenheads are favorite targets of many waterfowl hunters. In Oklahoma, duck hunting seasons and species limits are set independently each year based on federal guidelines. In January 2025, duck season continues through Jan. 26 in all of Oklahoma except the Panhandle. At this time, the daily limit for mallards is five, with no more than two being hens. ♡

Mallards are an ideal representation of a "dabbling duck" — those that tip their bodies vertically in the water to reach underwater plants, almost never diving.

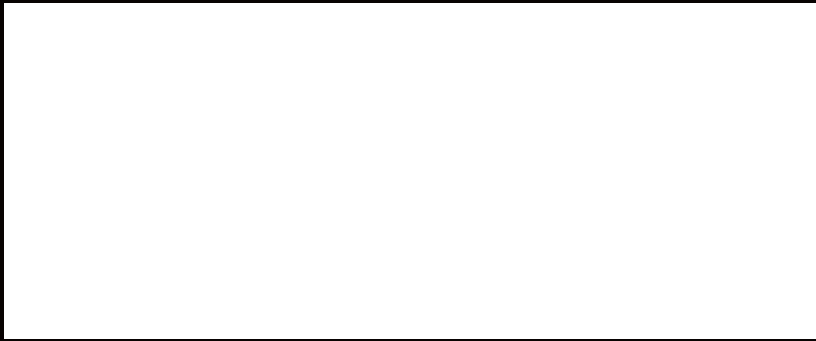
Male Mallard



Female Mallard



JAMES WAREHAM / RPS 2023



MICK THOMPSON/FLOKOR CC-BY-NC2

Geese continue winging their way south through the winter, giving hunters the opportunity to bag some snows, blues and Canadas until those regular seasons come to a close Feb. 9 across all of Outdoor Oklahoma.

Outdoor Oklahoma

